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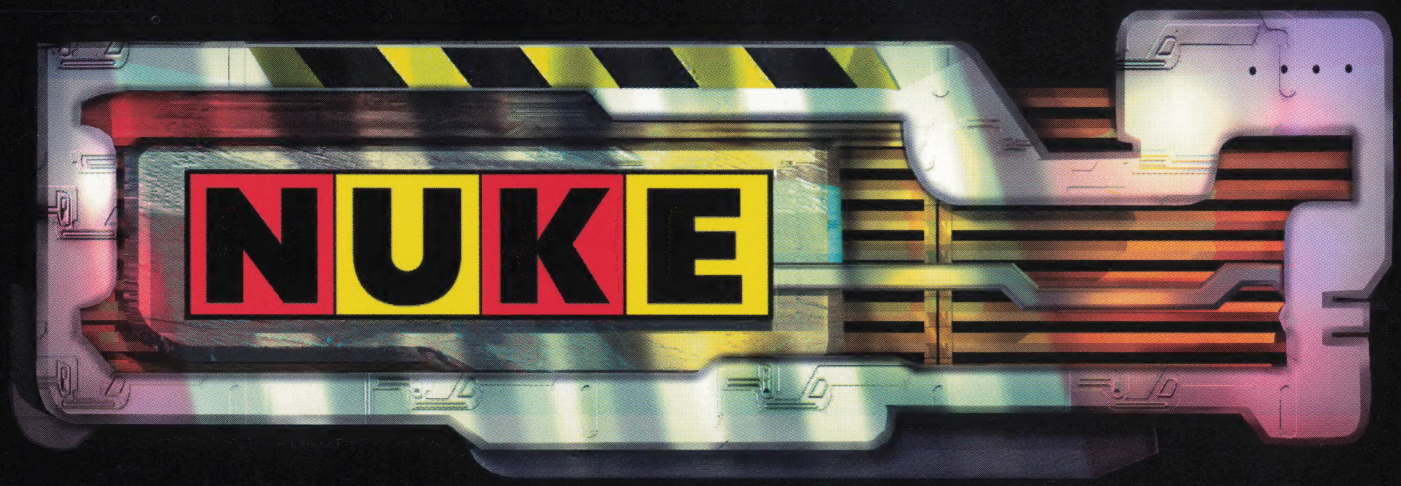

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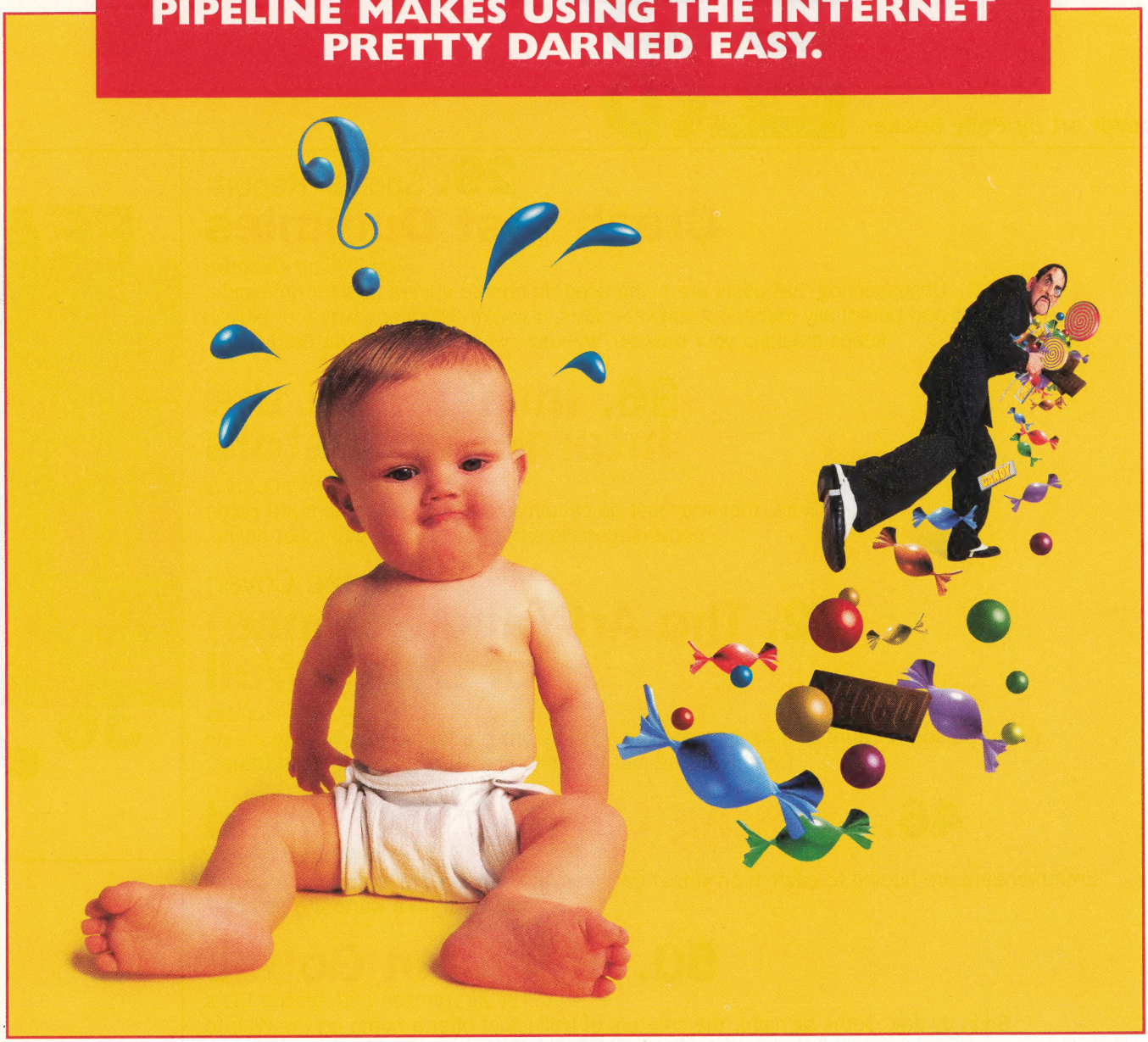

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cover art by Polly Becker

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by Simson Garfinkel

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60. On the Net with... Linda Ellerbee

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The award-winning journalist is no longer "riding the elephant." Instead she's broken new ground with Microsoft's multimedia program *On the Record*.

71-80. The WebGuide*

We take the good, we take the bad, we take them both and there you have it, the WebGuide, the WebGuide. When the Web doesn't seem to be living up to your dreams, it's time you start using the WebGuide to find the best the Web has to offer you. It takes a lot to get the URLs right, when you're compiling the WebGuide.

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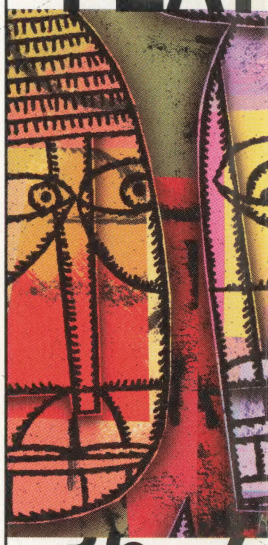

DEPAR

volume 1, issue 08 july 1996

TMENTS

4. Inside the Underground: If it's in this month's magazine, chances are you'll find a description of it here.

6. Masthead: New and Improved. See if you can spot the changes.

8. Contributors: You know, the only reason we use new writers and illustrators is to fill this space.

9. Hyperlink—The Letter from the Editors: Meet our shiny, new corporate sponsors.

10. E-Mail: The mailbag bursts forth with letters from you, the readers. Plus: you guessed it, The Deady Watch.

14. Top Ten: With apologies to Casey Kasem, we're counting down the top Web sites all the way to #1.

16. Alt.Culture.Watch: Chandler Bing finds love online, dissecting David Duchovny's denouncement and homeless pages.

18. Netline—News You Need: The rating game, encryption exportation, digital disobedience and the Wizards at Oz.

24. Weird on the Web: Our bazaar of the bizarre includes a naked dancing llama, sea monkey worship, squashed bugs and Satan's résumé.

63. Spotlight—A closer look at this month's #1 site: Is Walt Disney really frozen? We reveal all in a talk with the creator of the fascinating Disney Urban Legends page.

64. Reviews: A comparative look at Internet White Pages. Plus, protecting your computer against extraterrestrials.

67. FAQ: The maintainer of *The Simpsons* FAQ reveals his love for Lisa.

68. 403 Forbidden: When a man loves a woman...and another woman...and another man. Making a case for polyamory.

69. Flamethrower: Self-important spamhunters are now part of the problem.

81. Web Pages We're Glad We Can't Find: Temp-O-Rama's sure-fire interviewing tips!

82. At Large: Is it Mirsky or Mirskybot? You be the judge.

inside
underg

Electric Paper

Sick of entering all those URLs? Worry no more about hyphens and tildes. Now all the URLs mentioned in this issue* are ready for instant linking at our Webbed companion Underground Online at http://www.underground-online.com

*Excluding the WebGuide. Tax and title are extra. Not valid on four-door model. Residents of Oregon add 5.6% sales tax. Some settling may occur in shipping. Alternate prize available for children three and under. Percent values based on a 2,000 calorie diet. If itchiness or redness occurs, immediately discontinue use and consult your physician.

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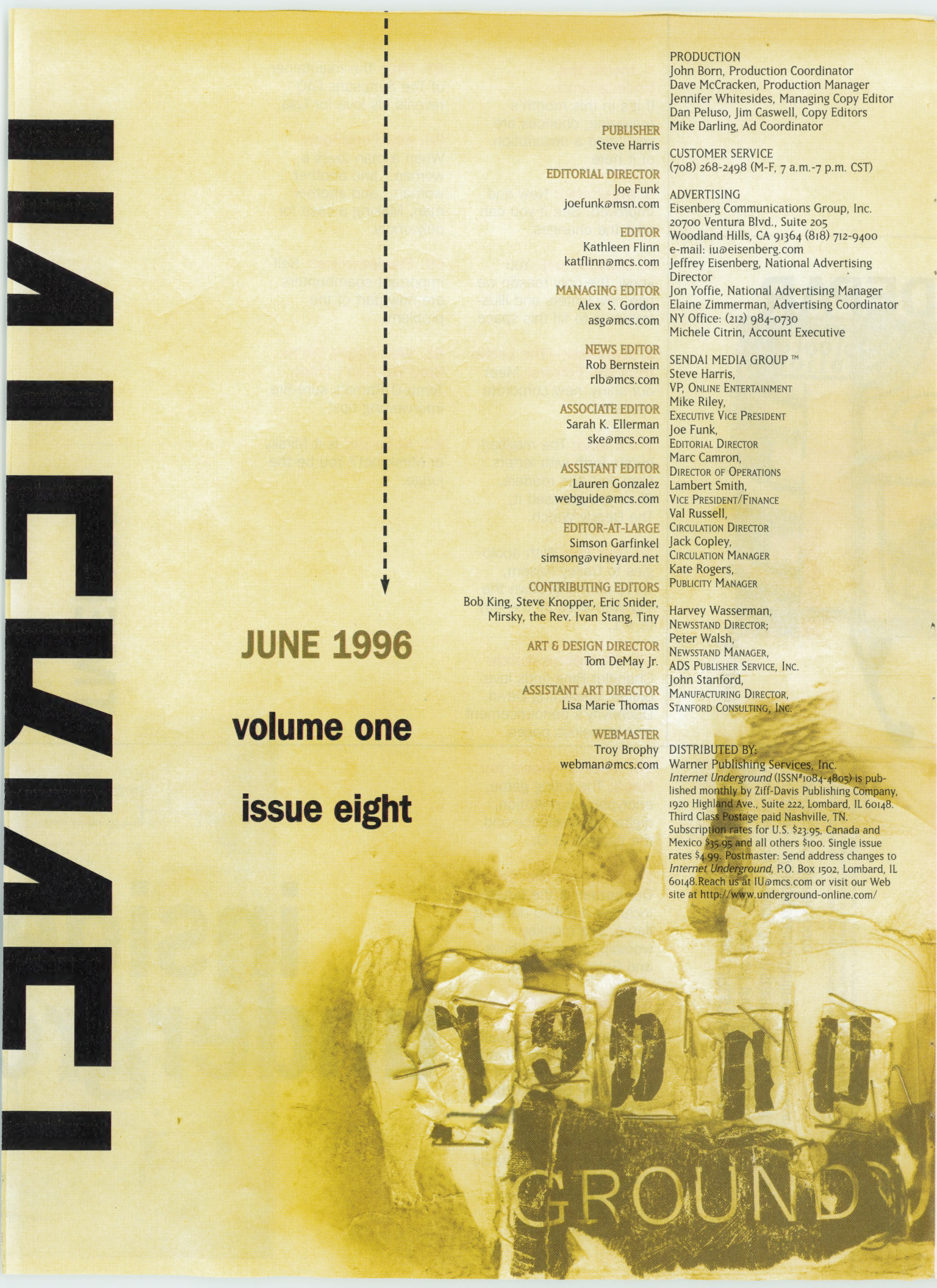

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Contributors

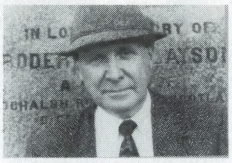
Michael McCormick ("Internet Impostors") is a St. Paul-based freelance writer who also programs computers to pay the rent. His degree was in Artificial Intelligence applications with natural language (e.g., English) interfaces. "But I'm not an AI geek," he insists. "I was glad Kasparov kicked Deep Thought's butt back to the IBM drawing boards. Wanting a computer to beat the world's best human chess player would be like rooting for the Borg to beat Captain Picard."

He has personally conversed with many AI personalities that lurk on the 'net. "I've also met humans pretending to have artificial intelligence," he says. "Both can make pretty convincing conversation if you don't ask too many hard questions." (m.mccormick2@genie.com)

Particularly astute readers will recall that news editor Rob Bernstein lost an ill-fated three-pound burrito eating contest to a co-worker (*IU* #6). Turns out, artist **Pat "color blind" Sandberg** was the co-worker in question. To further pummel young Bernstein and show him who is *really* superior, Sandberg reduced him to a quivering ball of a man in his illustration for "Leaving Las Vegas Behind." Sandberg got his start as a technical illustrator for college textbooks and his work has been featured in *Statics & Dynamics* and *Historical Geology*. (?!) He works in the art department here at Sendai, *er*, Ziff-Davis, but we're not sure what he does exactly, although it has something to do with color correction and the mastery of all Doom™-type games. If he sounds like your dream date, send along a gif, brief description and favorite Yoo-Hoo® flavor care of IU@mcs.net to Sandberg's attention.

ON OUR COVER:

John Hofsess ("The Art of Dying Well") was born in Hamilton, Ontario and in the mid-'60s founded an "underground" filmmaking group along with Ivan Reitman and David Cronenberg. He was *Maclean's* film critic for five years and received a National Newspaper Award for Critical Writing, among other awards for journalism. In 1991, when he founded The Right to Die Society of Canada, he said it was necessary to move "beyond mere words and artifice" and become a creative force in the theater of real life. He was instrumental in creating the "human rights" campaigns of Sue Rodriguez (who was afflicted with ALS) in 1992-3; and Austin Bastable (who suffered from multiple sclerosis) in 1995-96 and who recently had an assisted suicide with the help of Dr. Jack Kevorkian. jh@rights.org



COVER ILLUSTRATOR

Boston-based artist **Polly Becker** ("The Art of Dying Well") has a fascination with all things old. Often, she'll use her collection of aging oddities in her work, as evident on this month's cover. Her work has appeared in *Harper's*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Ms.*, *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*. Perhaps her fondness for an older, simpler time may be at the root of Becker's indifference to computers. Although she may be doing work for an Internet magazine, Becker told art director Tom DeMay she doesn't really know the difference between a PC and a Mac.

Mitchell Lavnick ("Leaving Las Vegas Behind") cut his teeth wagering on New York Cosmos games as a kid. "I once had the Chicago Sting and one goal, when Pele, with something like 20 seconds left on the clock, bicycle kicks one in past Dieter whatshisname, and I lose my shirt." Lavnick recovered his losses, and currently resides in Greenwich Village, where he does research for a nationally syndicated financial columnist, freelances magazine articles and runs a numbers game out of the back of a local bodega. "Occasionally I have to twist off a knee cap or break a finger. But I can think of worse ways to make the rent." mitchl@inch.com

Richard Downs ("Invasion of the Internet Impostors") once again graces our pages (loyal readers will remember him from "Watching the Digital Detectives" in *IU* #3). Downs' home page showcases the brilliant work he's done recently—check it out at www.earthlink.net/~downsart/.

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Reviewer Lauren Gonzalez intended to give the Dragnet program (*IU* #7, Reviews p. 66) five stars, rather than the three and a half it received.

Mamavamp@aol.com was kind enough to point out that we mixed up the undead in Justin Ware's "The Immaculate Reception" (*IU* #6). In her words, "Dr. Natalie Lambert (Catherine Disher, *Forever Knight*) is NOT—I repeat—NOT A VAMPIRE. Only Nick, LaCroix, Janette, Vachon and Screed are (or were) vampires."

In "It's Alive! Online Sci-Fi TV" (Netline, *IU* #6) we published the wrong URL for downloading White Pine Software's CU-SeeMe program. The correct address is **http://www.wpine.com.**

In the "Top 11 Newbie Faux Pas" list from our "Infamous 11's of the 'net" story (*IU* #6), number 6 read "Actually pays their shareware fees." While this was an obvious attempt at humor, we'd like to encourage all our readers to respect all the hardworking shareware programmers out there and fork over their fees.

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SUCKING and Selling Out

MEET OUR NEW CORPORATE SPONSORS

We learned to rationalize way back in kindergarten. If reality didn't go the way we wanted, we'd just stitch together a cunning little patchwork of carefully chosen facts and excuses and hold it up to the light. **Look, Mom, isn't this pretty?** Our Palmer penmanship has devolved into feverish scribbles, we hesitate when calculating six times eight, but our childhood skill at rationalizing has stayed in tip-top shape.

We want to believe that everything will work out with Social Security, despite that ominous population bubble. And we desperately wanted to believe President Bush when he urged us to read his lips. But more than anything, we really want to believe that selling *Internet Underground* to a mega-conglomerate multibillion-dollar international publishing corporation will not pose any kind of problem.

You see, in May, our parent company, Sendai Media Group, was sold to massive publishing giant Ziff-Davis. You probably know them; they publish *PC Magazine*, *MacUser*, *Inter@ctive Weekly* and *Computer Life*, as well as many other titles in the industry. We here in the underground, used to scraping by with stolen paper clips and pens lifted from trade shows, were a bit stunned to suddenly be part of **The Family.**

It all happened one momentous Wednesday. Sendai staffers, geeks and gamers all, were ushered *en masse* into a conference room at high noon and told the good news by our new parents. New parents who looked a little, well, *shinier* than what we'd been used to, despite their emphatically casual dress. They had brought along kits. Health plans. Paychecks with a different signature. This was clearly an adult venture.

We panicked. We hid under our desks. Bernstein threw up. Twice. Would the suits swoop down on us, demanding a moratorium on humor and a prospectus on ISDN? We clutched our beloved back issues of *IU*, wondering what would come to pass. We considered staging a coup, but then realized that that works in political scenarios, not corporate takeovers. Besides, all we were armed with were our Jarts.

In the face of such a reality warp, we began to rationalize, as we learned at such a tender age. We hit the local T.G.I.Friday's and tossed some ideas around over chimichangas. Hey, it might be fine. Ziff-Davis could get us more advertisers. That would be cool. We're sure to get better distribution; it makes us sad when people have to e-mail Tiny, saying that they can't find *IU* on newsstands. Perhaps our popularity will grow so much that Ziff-Davis will license our image, with a line of action figures based on our editorial and art team. We envisioned the official Tom DeMay™ Action Figure. "See him fight evil with his quick use of Quark! Blind villains with his stunning graphics!" Lunch degenerated into a freewheeling design session of the molded figurine of Evil Editorial Empress Kathleen Flinn™ and speculation on whether we would be approached for a group Diet Coke commercial.

Read *our* lips: We're the same people as we ever were. We just have some very capable new bosses who are committed to getting the magazine the promotion and respect that it deserves. And that's a good thing, right? *IU* is still going to talk to you in the way you're used to, covering the culture and technology and weirdness of the 'net. We promise to fight the good fight for all the worthy online causes. We'll eradicate censorship! Fight Senator Exon bare-fisted and knock him whimpering to the ground! And make absolutely sure that every site devoted to food experimentation is given the press it deserves!

(Of course, we're rationalizing. We're just a bunch of sell-outs, even though we had absolutely nothing to do with it.)

But it does make it seem even *more* unlikely that we'll be folded, doesn't it, **Mr. Deady?**

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Lombard, IL 60148

email

THE USUAL BLEH, BLEH

Bleh bleh better than Wired. Bleh bleh more happening than "insert plethora of other weak Internet rags here." Funny! Bold! Imaginative! I actually have been running all the way to the local store to buy your 'zine! Bleh Bleh represents the people. I am enjoying the latest issue as much as any of the others. Way to prove DEADY wrong. You will prevail! You rule! Asskisses to the whole staff! I plan to keep on buying and buying...I have even considered a move to Illinois (from superior New York) so I can beg a job from yous and become part of the fun, but for now I will just enjoy the marvy read! Bleh Bleh the best...and I read 'em all.
Thanks muchly,
Amy R.
amelia@j51.com

HAPPY TO HAVE AOL

In your article, "Who's To Blame For Bottlenecks on The Highway," I was surprised so many people were having difficulty with their online services. I have been so pleased with my responses. I send e-mail out one day and get a reply in less than 24 hours. I have AOL and feel that it was an injustice to the service when your article stated "God help you if your license plate ends with AOL." If anyone was interested in going on line, I would greatly encourage them to do so. It has added many positive and educational dimensions to my life.
Arlene A. Ratliff
EDWRT33@aol.com
Baltimore, Md.

Tiny says: Gee Arlene, we weren't criticizing AOL's tech support response time, but rather expressing our disgust that they flood the 'net with users at a crippling rate. Flaunting your AOL allegiance may earn you scorn, no matter how useful you may find the service.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I purchase most of the computer magazines on the market and review them for our library at work; yours is probably (at least so far) the best and most interesting that I've read. The info is not only relevant to a large number of readers but useful. Yesterday I purchased Yahoo Internet Life magazine (although it's volume 2, it's the first time I've seen it on the market). You have no worries. I'll never waste my $6 on that one again. You may or may not be thrilled to know that your mag will now be passed around an IRS office in Texas.
Loyal reader in Dallas,
Diane Shuskey
dants@ix.netcom.com

Tiny says: Diane, you may or may not be thrilled to know that our mag is now owned by the same folks who own the Yahoo magazine you referred to. That said, like any good sibling, we're happy to get the lion's share of attention and love.

LET'S PLAY FAIR

Let me preface this by saying that *Internet Underground* is an excellent magazine. Because of the work I do, I subscribe to virtually all of the Internet-based magazines. I find them all useful to some extent, especially those that focus on Web marketing and technical issues surrounding hardware and software. But that's my job. When I surf the Web for fun, I find *IU* to be the one periodical I look forward to each month. Keep it up.
That said, I would like to take issue with two of your Web reviews in the April WebGuide. The bone I wish to pick has nothing to do with the subjective side of the reviews, since after all, the entire purpose of reviews is to express opinions. What I do take issue with, however, is the objectivity of the magazine's reviews. For example, in your review of the *Washington Times* Web site, the writer states: "No liberal bias" promises the national weekly...Much to our chagrin, we found plentiful conservative bias." As anyone who follows politics knows, the *Washington Times* was created and is marketed as a conservative newspaper. It has never made any pretense to being unbiased, and this bias is one of the reasons the writer pans the site. Under that type of logic, you would also have to pan *Mother Jones* or *The Nation* for being liberal, or *National Review* for being conservative. On the other hand, *IU* provided an absolutely glowing review on the Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) site. The writer even calls FAIR "the media watchdog of them all." FAIR is not a non-partisan media watchdog, and just like the *Washington Times*, FAIR only points the reader in "one direction." FAIR's stated goals are a virtual "liberal" agenda, and the only media "errors" they correct are those that place the liberal agenda in an unflattering light. The entire board of FAIR, from Ed Asner to Mike Ferrell reads like a "Who's Who in American Liberal Thought." In fact, serious students of politics could make a claim that the name "FAIR" is in and of itself neither fair nor accurate! If *IU* has a political bias that is fine, as long as that bias is stated. And, I have no problem with FAIR getting a five-star rating and the *Washington Times* garnering only two stars, as long as those ratings are not based on political bias. Giving *IU* the benefit of the doubt, I can only assume that the reviewer was not familiar with either the mission or the agenda of either publication. If that is the case, I suggest that *IU* use more politically aware reviewers when rating political Web sites.
Russ Lay
russlay@Interpath.com

IU reviewer Lauren Gonzalez says: I didn't give the site a low score because of its politically-oriented content. I gave it a low score because it's a lousy site. However, I admit that I should have focused on the more technically wanting aspects of the site in my review, rather than focusing on the content. I am a card-carrying member of the "liberal media," but like all the IU *editors, I try to be objective and fair in my reviews, as well as my reporting.*

Tiny says: Don't blame me, I voted for Bush.

A DIFFERENT DRUMMER

Kick-ass magazine! Lombard, Illinois? So has anyone ever marched in drum corps? And for whom?

Dangerous Dan
DanSaeger@chtree.com

Tiny says: No, no one here has ever marched in the drum corps. But Ovi, my mailroom companion, played second oboe in the marching band. The funny thing is that now he plays second fiddle in the mailroom.

WHAT A'BOT JULIA?

Picked up issue #4, liked it, but wanted to know one thing: You mentioned a chatbot called Julia ("Killing the Language, Razing the Standards" by Sarah Ellerman), but you didn't give the address to the TinyMUD she inhabits. I was wondering if you could e-mail me this address because I am currently working on a similar project, and I would like to see Julia for myself. Thanx in advance.

tempest@axess.com

Sarah says: Julia's home page is at ***http://fuzine.mt.cs.cmu.edu/mlm/julia.html****. To talk one-on-one with Julia, you can* ***telnet://julia@fuzine.mt.cs.cmu.edu*** *and login as "julia" with no password; to find her in her natural habitat, visit DruidMUCK at* ***moink.nmsu.edu:4201****. Read more about her exploits in our story on artificial intelligence in this issue on page 36.*

WHAT IS DEADY'S DEAL?

Just sitting here reading your mag when I came across the message from Mr. Deady....What is he talking about when he says that the mag is confusing to follow? I had no problems! If he thinks this is hard, I'd hate to see him try to surf the 'net on the WWW (all that is is hyperlinks). And not giving the mag six months, get REAL! You have the best Internet mag that I have seen to date. He states that some of your main content can be found elsewhere... yeah, on the Internet, surely NOT another magazine. I haven't seen a magazine or TV show (such as C|NET) point out how you leave electronic traces of where you've been on the 'net or how someone can track you down just by your Internet e-mail address. No other computer magazines that I am aware of are talking about this. Or the use of anonymous remailers. You just can't find this stuff anywhere else.

Later.

Hebert, Jerome
hebe108w@wonder.em.cdc.gov

HYPOCRISY SHMYPOCRISY

You know, I finally decided to check out the Web site after months of resisting to do such. But the more I thought about it, the more I thought, "Sure, why not?" Well, now I know why. As one of your "11 most bothersome home page clichés," ("Infamous 11s of the Net" *IU* #6) you had free Netscape advertising. I glanced to the bottom of *your* page to find, lo and behold, not only Netscape, but also Microsoft advertising. I was

in distress to say none the least! I was thinking to myself, "Man, this great magazine has just committed an act of hypocrisy! I cannot, no, I *will not* believe it." Then in a flash of brilliance it came to me! No, not the sun, but why you actually *did not* commit this aforementioned act. It's very simple. You have *both* Netscape and Microsoft displayed on your page, that is fairness of competition, whereas the home page in question only had Netscape. I can sleep better at night, the grass seems greener, my connection seems faster. *sigh* I feel at one with nature and the 'net now.

Now aside from all the mellow dramatics. :) I feel that your magazine is among the best of those out there. I will not, however, as will many foaming mouth individuals so often do, tout your magazine as *the* best. In my opinion, there are several magazines that will have contents that the other magazines will not feature but they are still, nonetheless, worth a look. Sure, it's media and information overkill, but hey, as humans we live life in the fast lane or else we become roadkill (noting the many analogies of life on a highway and that of the Internet). After all, it is popular, you know.

And to conclude this overly drawn-out and spell-checker-free letter, I bid you farewell until I see fit to write you again. Godspeed, ISDN and all that crap. :) <Emoticons: You just *have* to love them!>

Subscribingly URS,

Todd
a.k.a. Zen, the Technophile with a Luddite conscience
tfeltner@fly.hiwaay.net

THE SNAKEMANNN SPEAKETH

My name is Victor the SnakeMannn. I want to thank you and chew yer butt at the same time. Please don't take this wrong, but thanks fer the review ("Weird on the Web, *IU* #6). I bought five copies of the issue. I would only like to know why I did not get a picture put in there? I was the only one on the page that did not get a picture. You could've used the pic of me and Alice Cooper, or just one of me by myself. Please expect a lot of e-mail to your address, as I have a big following. I mean you put a pic of some extra-hairy English Cab driver, and not one of me. Go figure! I mean if it was a question of asking my permission, I have multiple e-mail links to this address on most of my pages. I have even more pics from some recent shows, but I lost my scanner, so I haven't added them to the fold yet. I am sorry to be such a weiner about all this, but it was brought to my attention by several of your readers. If there is any way I could get a free subscription for the injustices I have suffered, please send it to me. Other than what happened to me, you have some of the best content on the Internet in your publication. I enjoy reading it every month!

Thanks fer yer time,

Victor the SnakeMannn
http://home.navisoft.com/snakemannn

Tiny says: Gee Vic, most people are just happy to be mentioned in the magazine. Not to quibble, but in the same section of "Weird on the Web" there are four other sites that have no photos. Seeing as you're such an enthusiastic reader and how your wife also took the time to write and express her disappointment, here's a photo we selected, a delightful shot of you invading the personal space of Keanu Reeves. I hope you buy five copies of this issue too.

email

THE *IU* FORUM

Tiny,
Who is that gorgeous lady in the "floppy dress?" I think I'm in electronic love! I have been with you guys since issue #2, and still kicking myself for not picking up #1. Keep it up people, I'm here to stay as long as you are!
NetLasher
strider2@ix.netcom.com

Tiny says: That "gorgeous lady" is none other than assistant editor Lauren Gonzalez. She doesn't make it down to the mailroom quite often, but when she does, she always has a kind word for Ovi and me. She kind of reminds me of my younger sister who's away at college studying to be a veterinarian. Anyway, the mailroom has been flooded with all sorts of letters from "healthy" netizens wanting to know more about Lauren, but sorry guys, she's spoken for.

HO? HO? OH NO!

Hey there,
Thanks for about the only good magazine on the 'net out there, or at least the only one cunning enough to suck me in. You do a good job, I guess. (you guess?) In fact, I really didn't mind any of the 'zine, except, well...even as "Worst of the Web," no unsuspecting mainland hacker needs any "vacationing in Hawaii" tips from Don Ho (Mirsky's @Large, *IU* #6). I personally hold him responsible for every dumbass tourist that came up to me and asked if we take (even the Bradys?) American money, for every time I went to the mainland and they wanted me to speak Hawaiian, for every time some unbelievably STUPID thought was thought about the islands. Want some real info? Go to virtually Hawaii at least.
Sitting on a rock in the middle of the Pacific and getting carpal tunnel syndrome,
Adam Souza
Libertine # 76

KNIGHT MOVES

To whom it may concern,
Does the the organization that is attempting to save the television series Forever Knight ("The Immaculate Reception," by Justin Ware, *IU* #6) have an address where they will accept written correspondence supporting their efforts?
Thank You,
Tracy Garnett
Covington, KY

Tiny says: You bet Tracy, the address is:
The Friends of Forever Knight
SOS-FK
P.O. Box 30596
Alexandria, VA 22310-9998
By the way, reruns of Forever Knight are now showing on the Sci-Fi Channel. I have to tape them though, because they're on opposite Melrose Place.

THE DEADY WATCH
An *IU Monthly Feature*

In a previous letter, a reader refers to a Mr. G. A. Deady of Columbus, Ohio, who back in January opined that our magazine would last only six months. We've already exceeded his perilous prediction (you're reading Issue #8), but we will continue to publish the Deady Watch as a constant reminder of where we've been and where we're going.

Ladies and Germs:
Let me get the sucking up out of the way. Great mag—it's about time someone put out a 'net magazine that: 1) I can afford to subscribe to—I'm going to ASAP; 2)doesn't plug the big boys (AOL etc.)—and isn't afraid to trash them either; and 3) writes about stuff I'm actually interested in. Keep it up. (Loved the WebGuide too.) I thought the "Top 11" lists were great—particularly the "Top 11 Newbie Faux Pas."
So, in the spirit of those lists, here's one of my own:

TOP 11 WAYS TO TELL IF THE ONLY SEX A FELLOW 'NETTER GETS IS CYBERSEX

11. Queries everyone on the channel, asking one thing: "M or F?"
10. Has a "sexy" screen name, a lá "BgTenInch"
9. Gets p——d off when the object d'amour starts talking to another guy—"Back off, she's mine!"
8. First thing they say isn't "Hi all," but "I'm an M. I need an F for cybersex. Any takers?"
7. Constantly asks for "age/sex checks."
6. Best pickup line is "Hey baby, wanna go private?"
5. Assumes all women online look like *Penthouse* video girls.
4. Often asks females to "dance for me."
3. Whines if no women on the channel pay attention to him...
2. So he resorts to typing "I REALLY DO HAVE A BIG TEN INCHER...."
1. And asks, "Wanna see it?"

Again, keep up the good work. My check is on the way.
Merci,
Dave Belanger
DBJr@ix.netcom.com

THE 21st CENTURY IS HERE

An ordinary woman transformed into a virtual reality nightmare...

Genetically-enhanced killers who hunt in two linked bodies at once...

A religious conspiracy that could shatter the universe...

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NET (TOP TEN)

Urban Legends Reference Page: Disney
http://www.best.com/~snopes/disney/disney.htm

Did the Haunted Mansion really cause someone to have a heart attack? Does Aladdin encourage teens to disrobe? Is Walt Disney really frozen? The answer to these questions and many more Disney legends are revealed here by urban folklore aficionado David P. Mikkelson, who has painstakingly researched and cataloged over two dozen of the more persistent rumors. For the record, the answers are no, no and no, but as is the case with most urban legends, the fun of this site lies in reading how these tales were started, then spread (for full story behind this month's #1 site, read "Spotlight," page 63).

Enter magazine
http://www.entermag.com

Enter magazine is your guide to shedding your college skin, metamorphosing into an adult and entering the fabled "real world." If you're having trouble leaving the Ramen noodles and work-study gigs behind, jump over to *Enter* and get the goods on what it means to lease a vehicle, work as a temp, snag an apartment and negotiate a salary. They research those weird jobs that everyone wants and doesn't know how to get (i.e., beer-taster). They even publish recipes for the cooking-impaired. A priceless resource for any hapless twentysomething with a SLIP account and an unemployment check.

NameBase Book Index
http://www.pir.org/

Every so often, a site such as the Public Information Research NameBase reminds us that the 'net *can* be utilitarian. NameBase is a textual compilation of names, companies and organizations gathered from investigative books published since 1962. This site is for investigators, writers, students and anyone with research needs. The information here can be accessed free via telnet, or a quick-search database on the Web site. If you search online, you will receive a list of books related to your specific key word and a brief summary of each. A useful feature is the counter that displays how many times your term has been searched online during the past week. General category searches are an option if you prefer the deductive method of research. The offline floppy disk version of NameBase will set you back about $80, but the free online version seems to be sufficient for most research. Select articles from NameBase newsline are also included.

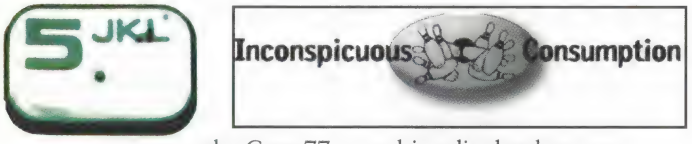
The World of Rollercoasters
http://www.rollercoaster.com/

The opening paragraph on The World of Rollercoasters home page describes a sensation that every rollercoaster enthusiast would appreciate: the thrill of sitting in the front car, ascending the first steep incline, then hanging over the top waiting for the rest of the train to catch up while the track unfolds before you. This lengthy site is not a static information well, but rather an endless loop of rollercoaster news and announcements combined with amusement park gossip, project updates and new ride highlights. The review section has a database that you can search by park, author or location to get the ups and downs of roller-

coasters worldwide. Curious about where to find the fastest coaster? The steepest? It's all here. Complete with FAQ and image gallery.

Inconspicuous Consumption
http://www.core77.com/beerframe/

Writer Paul Lukas' illuminating essays deconstructing consumer culture have been delighting readers of his 'zine *Beer Frame Journal* for years. Finally, thanks to



the Core 77, a multimedia development company, Lukas' ruminations on Pepperidge Farm white bread, Armour Pork Brains in Milk Gravy and Coors Artic (sic) Ice Beer are available to those who eschew paper. New essays are posted every two weeks, an interminable period to wait for Lukas' unique insight.

the blue dot
http://www.razorfish.com/bluedot/

the blue dot initially describes itself with a flurry of verbs: "converging growing changing," as well as "rocking feeling seething" and "rotating pulling breathing." If we were forced to pick out a noun, we would call this an experimental gallery, but we'd rather bow to the quirky and kinetic portrait that the site's creators have painted. Exploration will reveal reflective photographic exhibits, digital art and paintings, all by noted artists and ranging in subject from rock icons to gargoyles to unauthorized U.S. postage stamps. The section typoGRAPHIC celebrates the beauty of type and examines its treatment in digital media. *the blue dot* is dark, brilliant and charming.

The Bonfire of Liberties
http://www.humanities-interactive.org/

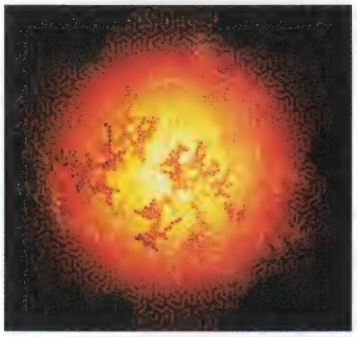
Brought to us by The Texas Humanities Resource Center, Bonfire is a heavily graphical interactive look at censorship through the ages. From Shakespeare to Mark Twain to Judy Blume, the list of authors who have been deemed indecent is staggering. There are more than 100 images at the site, including historic covers of banned books, religious paintings depicting book burnings and art once deemed threatening. Each image is accompanied by a brief description, but in most cases, the pictures say it all.

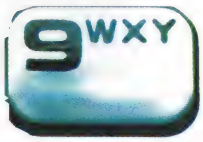
The Easter Egg Archive
http://weber.u.washington.edu/~davidnf/eggframe.html

In the words of the site's intro: "No, this isn't a list of little round, brightly colored ova. In this case, the term 'Easter Egg' refers to the secret tricks and features that programmers often put into major software releases." With the secrets listed here, we discovered a Doom-like world in Excel and an instant keyboard link to the Netscape FishCam. One caveat: The site is a *huge* time suck.

The Why Files
http://whyfiles.news.wisc.edu

More Scully than Mulder, the Why Files site explores today's headlines from a scientific viewpoint. Covering subjects ranging from





tornados to forensics to the reliability of political polls, the writing is engaging with plenty of links and snazzy graphics. Another winning feature is the Cool Science Image, a gallery of pictures featuring everything from extinct pollen grains to supernovas. Even if you think you don't like science, you should check out the Why Files for a better understanding of the world around you.

The Land of Pitman
http://www.greyware.com/authors/pitman/

Musings from both the left and right brain of one Mark Pitcavage, a historian and free-lance

writer. "Pitman" specializes in the history of the militia in America; his well-written commentaries on various present-day militia groups, such as the Freemen, are worth their weight in Netscape stock. However, Pitman can also shrug off academia and let his fun side show, as you'll see in his inventive lyrics of the imaginary "Nixon: The Musical," in his form with pop-up menus that enable you to sell your soul to Satan over the baudway, and in his ongoing quest for twisted Barbie doll concepts. Accept the randomness and you'll find tons of gripping source material here.

DOUBLE TALK

X-Files producer Chris Carter and star David Duchovny had this to say about the *X-Files* phenomenon on the Internet in the May 16 issue of *Rolling Stone*. We supplied the translations.

Carter talking about his Internet habits: "I'm online like 12 times a week, but I'm a surfer. I lurk."

Translation: Listen, I like being on the Internet, but I'm not stupid enough to let people know where I hang out so they can pester me with their stupid story ideas.

David Duchovny, when asked if he goes online for feedback: "No, I'm self-conscious enough with 10 million people looking at you every week. I don't need to go on the Internet to get confirmation that I suck."

Translation: Who cares what a bunch of computer nerds say, I'm in bed with Scully on the freaking cover of ***Rolling Stone***!

BARGAIN BIN

Toys for Big Boys
http://www.toysforbigboys.com

We were sitting around one morning thinking, "Wouldn't it be cool if we had our very own *Internet Underground* tourist submarine?" But, alas, where can one find such a nautical vessel? Then it hit us: Surely among the millions of 'net users there had to be someone trying to unload a used submarine. And sure enough, there was, at Toys for Big Boys. The site claims to be "The place to shop for everything from exotic cars to tourist submarines," but looking around there were no cars to be found. In fact, there was only one sub for sale, but whatta beaut' she was; an Explorer I, 33 metric tons of Swiss submarinin' fun. We were ready to buy, but what was this? No price is given at the site—you're asked to call an 800 number for that info. Well, no sale, we can't be expected to actually pick up the phone.

Numbers on the 'Net

In honor of our country's 220th birthday, we decided to put some revolutionary terms into Lycos.

Democracy 19,638	Tyranny 3,449
Taxation 13,553	Representation 40,879
Liberty 18,680	Death 60,025
Minutemen 790	Redcoats 102
Land 23,278	Sea 128

Netspeak

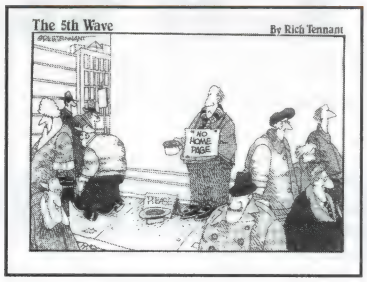
"We are faced with far greater concerns than whether Dole or Clinton is the president of the United States. In the inimitable words of Richard Nixon, 'Follow the money,' and you will understand who really has the power in this world and who pulls the strings to which we all dance."

—DIRECTOR OLIVER STONE COMMENTING ON THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE ON AOL

"A good bowel movement...a Chinese lady to clean my boat...and an understanding of the German people."

—NBC *LATE NIGHT* SIDEKICK ANDY RICHTER ON NBC.COM, ANSWERING THE INFAMOUS THREE-WISHES FROM A GENIE QUESTION

HOME (PAGE) LESS



Cartoonists have been quick to make visual commentary on the craze for virtual addresses. With remarkably similar art and punchlines, they aim to remind readers that some people live without the basic benefit of a home, much less a home page.

However, it's not a joke to one Palo Alto man. As reported by the *San Jose Mercury News*, panhandler Victor Frost has dropped the old-fashioned **"Will work for food"** sign in favor of a **cyber version** of the plea. He spent the spring outside businesses in the California town holding up a bright yellow hand-lettered placard that reads **"Will work for computer parts."** His goal? To put together a Web page to facilitate real-time efforts to help the homeless in Palo Alto, (referred to in the ultra politically correct town as the **"unhoused community"**).

Frost is trying to fix up a used 486 SX laptop purchased with panhandling proceeds. He needs an external modem, a diskette drive and a memory upgrade so he can use the Internet. Two high-tech workers have offered to help him design the page, he told the *Mercury News*. He plans to finance the **$30-a-month Internet access fee** with his **panhandling income**.

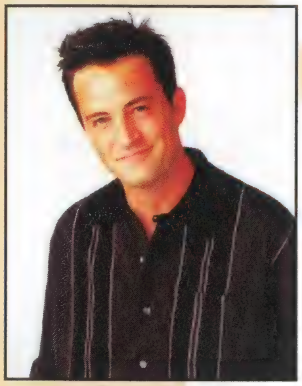
He explained to the paper why he thinks using the buffer of technology to reach the washed masses is important in letting people know how the homeless live, how it feels to be down and out and how they can help, all from the comfort of their homes. "That way," he told the paper, **"they don't have to see me face-to-face or smell me or feel intimidated."**

Victor Frost
Photo reprinted with permission of the
San Jose Mercury News

Other mediums

Virtual Friends

As much as it pains our cynical minds to say this, the **season finale of *Friends*** actually did a decent job of working the Internet into the episode's plot line. On the show, Chandler (Matthew Perry), the friend **so unlucky in love** that many fans speculate he's gay, turns to the Internet for romance. There he meets a woman and finds that in **cyberspace** he can drop his outwardly sarcastic behavior and act like **a true sap**. The virtual couple is shown chatting away while visiting the ***Guggenheim Museum Web site*** ("She likes art, I like funny words"). Chandler even uses the acronym "hh" for holding hands during his online date. All is well, until Pheobe (Lisa Kudrow) questions whether Chandler's new fling is really a woman: "For all you know she could be 90 years old, or have two heads, or she could be a guy, a big giant guy." To deduce his **cyberpal's gender**, Chandler asks what her current method of birth control is. She responds, "My husband's sleeping with his secretary." Chandler, distraught that his new love is married, is reluctant to meet her, but finally decides to go for broke and sets up a **rendezvous at Central Perk**. Nervous with anticipation, Chandler is **dumbstruck** when in walks his online sweetheart and she's none other than...well, in case you missed it we won't give it away. Hats off, though, to the producers of *Friends* for actually having Chandler hooked up to a phone line while online and for not using any **goofy screen shots** of **fake chat programs**.



Matthew Perry

IN JANUARY, THE MOST ACCESSED SITE ON THE WEB: AMERICA ONLINE, VISITED BY 41 PERCENT OF ALL WEB SURFERS. THE 8TH MOST VISITED WEB SITE DURING THAT SAME MONTH: THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN. THE MOST ACCESSED ENTERTAINMENT SITE ON THE WEB THAT MONTH: *PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE* (18TH OVERALL).

NETLINE

INTELLIGENCE REPORT: NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Send news information or comments to: RLB@MCS.NET

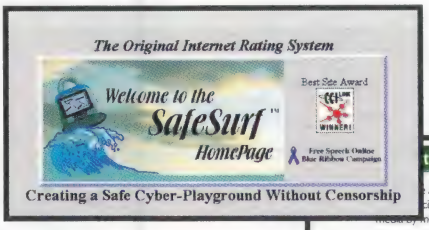
[The Ratings Game]

Can the Internet Community Prove to Congress That It's Capable of Self-Regulation?

WHEN IT COMES TO ISSUES OF REGULATING and rating content on the Internet, it appears that it's either the PICS way or a government censored infohighway. The Platform for Internet Content, or PICS, is a labeling and selection platform authored by 22 industry organizations under the auspices of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). In a nutshell, the labeling protocol allows Web users to create self-regulating rating systems that assess and rank content on the Web without compromising free speech rights—a healthy alternative, many believe, to the regulatory measures passed by benighted Congressional legislators.

These rating systems can vary widely since PICS only establishes technical specifications and not an actual rating system. So Yahoo!, using PICS protocol, could create their own rating system to rank all things "cool" on the 'net, the Anti-Defamation League could create a system to rate and block sites that promote hate speech on the Internet and the Boy Scouts of America could create a rating system to block out all sites the organization believes young men aren't yet "prepared" to peruse. (See **http://www. w3.org/pub/WWW/PICS/** for more technical details on how PICS works).

Of course, another major motive behind authoring PICS was to promote the advancement of more



family-and general audience-oriented rating systems where levels of profanity, nudity, sexual content and violence could be rated for all users. Such a system, in theory, might appease high-handed legislators. So far, two organizations have stepped up to the task of creating a generalized Internet rating standard: SafeSurf (**http://www.safesurf.com**), acknowledged as the first organization to announce a rating standard for the Internet and the Recreational Software Advisory Council, or RSAC (**http://www.rsac.org**), best known for their efforts in rating the computer gaming software market.

Unfortunately, while both rating standards are working toward admirable ends, not all is going well in the Internet rating game. According to sources close to the issue, resentment is building among the more dedicated advocates of SafeSurf who feel that the PICS Consortium is offering preferential treatment to the promotion of a single rating standard, namely RSAC*i* (RSAC for the Internet). "It's scandalous," said one source who requested anonymity. "SafeSurf has already been around for a year-and-a-half and even helped co-author the PICS standard, and now they're getting snubbed."

Both Wendy Simpson, president of SafeSurf and Stephen Balkam, executive director of RSAC maintain that competition is healthy for the marketplace, but according to an outspoken and aggressive supporter of the SafeSurf standard, who operates under the title "The Mad Monk of Cyberspace" (**http://www.childsafe.com**), there can be only one. "What [RSAC] is doing is causing confusion on the Internet," says the radically family-minded Monk. "Rather than compete, why not get together with the folks that created SafeSurf and improve what they already have. Why reinvent the wheel?"

The Mad Monk of CyberSpace

Balkam, however, doesn't agree that RSAC is merely "reinventing the wheel." Rather, he sees RSAC efforts as an improved, rounding-out of the rating system. "When RSAC was established in September of '94, it was recognized that the methodology that had been created for us by Dr. Donald Roberts of Stanford University was applicable to other media," Balkam explains.

But is there room enough for multiple Internet rating standards? Well, imagine if there were multiple standards in competition with the Motion Picture Association of America for rating new feature film releases, where one organization rates a movie "G," while another rates it "3" and yet another "XYZ." At what point does the creation of yet another Internet rating standard make the whole process of rating obsolete at all, particularly for the user who's new to the 'net?

Of course, SafeSurf and RSAC have corporate backing to promote their respective services, which makes it all the more difficult for newcomers to enter the already confusing ratings fray. As for the two services, it'll really be the consumer, not the corporations, who'll decide what stays and what goes in the end. And that's fine by us. **—Rob Bernstein**

[Losing the Keys]

Proposed Legislation Allows for the Unrestricted Export of Strong Encryption Programs, without a "Back Door Key"

HAILING FROM THE UNABOMBER'S alleged stomping grounds in rural Montana, Senator Conrad Burns (R-Mont.) is anything but a Luddite. As chairman of the Senate's Science, Technology and Space Subcommittee and as an all-around champion of online commerce and technology, the Missouri farm-raised

Burns rides Congress on encryption

Burns is raising a ruckus with FBI and Clinton admin-istration officials who are intent on limiting the widespread availability and export of powerful encryption technologies.

The ProCODE, or the Promotion of Commerce On-line in the Digital Era Act of 1996, is just the newest of a series of bills being introduced to Congress by the 'net savvy senator. It aims to: 1) legalize the unrestricted export of "mass-market or public-domain encryption programs;" 2) allow for the export of encryption programs if technologies of similar strength are available elsewhere in the world; 3) prohibit the government from mandating a "key-escrow" or "back door" system to be written into all encryption software products.

"People have access to stronger encryption technologies than we can currently export," argues Matt Raymond, press secretary for Sen. Burns. "The government has been using the export restrictions sort of as the Damocles hanging over the heads of computer users and the business and software community...And we simply don't think that the government should be in the business of peering into what should be private and proprietary records."

According to Dr. Dorothy Dunning, a computer science professor at Georgetown University and an outspoken advocate of government security measures like the Clipper chip, the Burns' bill goes way too far. Dunnings says that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is already hard at work developing an international compromise between industries and nations for a commercialized encryption standard. "These bills get thrown into our Congress that completely undermine these efforts to try and strike a balance and reach a compromise," Dunnings says.

Presently, the Pro-CODE bill awaits a tentative July hearing and mark-up, but may experience set-backs as a result of the resignation of one of the bill's major supporters, Bob Dole (the same Bob Dole responsible for the Dole-Grassley 'net censoring bill, considered by many to have been an even more Draconian alternative to the CDA). To follow the ProCode bill's progress in the coming months, head over to Sen. Burns' detailed site at **http://www.senate.gov/~burns/crypto.htm.**

PERCENTAGE OF POLLED BUSINESSES, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND UNIVERSITIES WHO CLAIMED TO BE THE VICTIM OF HIGH-TECH SABOTAGE IN THE PAST YEAR:

41 PERCENT

AT CURRENT MARKET VALUATIONS, THE WORTH OF NETSCAPE'S CHAIRMAN, JIM CLARK:

$1,137,240,000

SOURCES: PC-METERSM SWEEPS
THE COMPUTER SECURITY INSTITUTE
HTTP://WWW.PULVER.COM/MILLION/INDEX1.HTML

[Click, Clip and Save]

Inasmuch as "time is money," hardly a penny is saved by consumers who spend hours combing through the umpteen pages of Sunday newspaper coupon inserts. At e-Coupons' new online Web site at **http://www.e-Coupons.com** however, the thrifty-minded can quickly sort through categorized lists of coupons and find savings for products, other than Manwich and Rolaids, worth clipping (or printing out).

The service is free, but users will have to answer a few consumer-oriented questions for advertisers and provide demographic information to e-Coupons. Sure, it sounds like a drag, but e-Coupons promises to release personal information only to relevant advertisers. So, if on your registration form you indicate that you have a dog, you'll receive coupons from for products like Alpo and Chuck Wagon.

The site also offers users a "What's Hot" feature that lists new promotions, a suggestion box and a free entry into weekly raffles. At press time, the site was still in beta development and only offered coupons and promotions to users at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, but e-Coupons promises to add 50 more campuses in 1996 and up to 200 more in 1997.

In addition to offering college promotions, sections for local and national advertisers will also be posted by e-Coupons in the near future.

[The Wizards at Oz]

New Browser and Server Technologies Bring 3-D Internet Navigation to the Next Level

A SWIRLING TORNADO SURROUNDS your house. The storm windows are violently slapping open and shut, the front door is quickly coming unhinged and Toto is barking wildly from underneath the bed. Then, in an instant, all goes silent as the whirlwind ceases. You walk to what once used to be the front foyer of your house and step over some strewn debris to the world outside. As you exit, you're momentarily blinded by a glowing, spinning light. It's not the sun, no, it's a 25th-century version of a mirrored dance-hall disco ball that's whirling above you. Before you can even register the bizarre succession of events that have just befallen you here, a three-foot munchkin avatar tugs at your pants leg and welcomes you to Planet X, the hippest VRML 3-D nightclub on the Internet. You're not quite certain how you made it here, but one thing's for sure, you're not in Kansas anymore.

The range of graphically rich VRML 3-D worlds soon to become available to users with a 14.4kbps or faster connection is mind boggling, and Planet X is just the beginning according to Thor Gunnarsson, vice president of strategic relations at Oz Interactive Inc., a hot industry developer of revolutionary new VRML browsers and servers. What sets the Oz Interactive 3-D browser and server apart from other Internet VRML technologies, like the popular Live 3D, is its blazing speed. For users who have ventured into 3-D worlds on the Web, movement across the VRML landscape is often slow and clunky, a consequence of having so many other users (or clients) simultaneously accessing a central server from where the multi-user communication is established. Oz's networking technology

[Mixed Media]

Internet Oscars?

On April 29, C/Net sponsored the first annual award ceremony for Internet excellence, a campy gala event complete with teleprompters, bad-joke-telling hosts and TV cameras taping the event for broadcast on the USA Network. The award categories focused mostly on 'net technologies, including Best Web Browser (won by Netscape), Best Search Engine (won by Digital's AltaVista) and Best Internet Development Tool (won by Sun Microsystems' Java). While the award show was interesting as a concept, we would have liked to have seen some more content-oriented awards, particularly since categories like Best Internet Browser can only vary so much from year to year. May we suggest a Best Internet Magazine category for next year?

Must-See Web TV

Hoping to trump Gateway 2000's pricey $3,500 Internet connectable interactive television and RCA's prototype all-in-one Genius Theater system, Zenith Electronics Corp. (partnering with hardware and software design start-up Diba Inc.) is planning an October release of a high-speed modem-equipped television system. The 27-inch set will come with an Ethernet connection and customized hardware and Web browser software to enhance screen resolution, and will sell for an estimated $899. Also planned for a fall release is Curtis Mathes InterView technology, a multimedia system that hopes to deliver user-friendly interactive systems to Internet newbies.

An October release is planned for Zenith's 27-inch modem-equipped TV/Web Browser.

however, lessens the burden on a VRML site's central server and instead channels multi-user communication between client and client, or user and user.

"We're experimenting with it at the moment to see how far we can push this particular peer-to-peer networking," says Gunnarsson. "It looks like, at this point, that we can do that very quickly and at an acceptable speed for upward of six to eight different people communicating."

Founded in 1990 in Reykjavik, Iceland, as a special-effects animation house for television and commercial production companies, Oz Virtual is well positioned in their efforts to revolutionize the graphical richness of the VRML experience. In addition to the company's work with browser and server technology, Oz's Virtual Studio division is busy designing advanced Softimage 3-D modeled worlds that run on SGIs (think *Jurassic Park* dinosaurs). Converted into VRML, these 3-D models rival some of the best CD-ROM graphics currently available on the consumer market and far surpass any existing 3-D realms on the 'net.

Beyond its incredibly cool design, Oz's virtual software also maintains some rather interesting functions, including support for multi-user audio and video conferencing, easily customizable avatars to virtually represent VRML users and 3-D spatial audio that creates the illusion of approaching or departing sounds. Perhaps the most innovative feature programmed into

the virtual software is that of the "help angel." Somewhat reminiscent of the campy virtual angel in the Michael Douglas film *Disclosure*, the Oz angel flies along with you as you navigate Oz's 3-D worlds. Through a text speech technology, rather than a Windows-like type interface, the angel is capable of greeting, paging and speaking with users and can offer verbal clues as to how to move through the 3-D space.

While Oz's VRML software worlds, with their character angels, 3-D audio and high design aesthetics, sound like rather large files to download over the Internet, Gunnarsson says that a typical file is only 150K zipped and can be accessed in under two minutes on a 28.8kbps modem. Sound too good to be true? Test the free VRML 1.0 compliant version at their site at **http://www.oz-inc.com** (on Aug. 1, the VRML 2.0 version will also be released). **—RB**

[>IU Insider]

Gaga over Gates

Now that Bill Gates has an offspring, one Web site creator believes that he may realize there's yet another area ripe for world domination. Namely, baby products. At his spoof site, you can look at prototypes for potential market dominators such as MS Pampers™ for Baby 96. But our favorite was the cover of Curious Feds, a retelling of the classic Curious George novels, described this way: "It will be nonstop laughter for you and your child as you follow the Feds through another bumbling attempt to stop Bill from taking over the world."

Another Way to Skin a User

If you think the way to avoid legal trouble when making comments on the 'net might be through lying about your identity to your service provider, think again. Consider the case of Jose Eduwardo Saavedra, a 19-year-old college student in El Paso, Texas. Saavedra was arrested in late May by authorities through his service provider, Primenet, after he allegedly posted threats to California State Senator Tim Leslie on Usenet, according to the Associated Press. His computer message, dated March 6, read: "Let's hunt Sen. Tim Leslie for sport...I think it would be great" if he "were hunted down and skinned and mounted for our viewing pleasure."

Primenet turned over information to the FBI to attain Saavedra's address, but the info. he gave to the ISP turned out to be bogus. The FBI still managed to track him down anyway. That's not Saavedra's only problem. In the words of administrator Jim Lippard, "he still owes us money."

Net Nomenclature

Plugging Away: The optimistic, yet fruitless act of trying to use a Netscape plug-in to play some animation, audio clip or video clip on a site.

Cybored: That general listless, disinterested feeling you get while waiting for a site to download. Also known as "Nethargy."

To "Melrose": A verb used to describe a Web site that starts out as borderline hot, but then quickly fades into the realm of the pathetically lame. See also "to Spot." Usage: "Wow, that site really *Melrosed.*"

Stuntman: Someone who, despite regularly taking a lot of abuse on Usenet, continues to post to newsgroups.

Send your Net Nomenclature submissions to iu@mcs.net. If we use it, you'll win the fabulous IU Random Prize™.

It hardly seems fair that the once-grueling college application process has been made so simple for the next generation of prospective students. But alas, it has thanks to **CollegeNET** at **http://www.collegenet.com,** a one-stop resource center where users can apply to a number of two-year, four-year and graduate level programs sans typewriters, intoxicating White-out and confounding registration forms. Scholarships and a three-ring binder load of information are also available at the site.

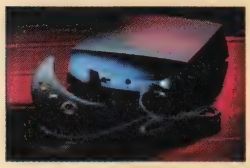
Online Admissions

Also worth a look is **The Gathering** at **http://takeme.com**. Despite the all-too-inviting URL, the college-minded site is entertaining and offers scholarship awards for excellence in writing and graphical artistry. And be sure to break open your virtual fortune cookie before leaving the site.

[Net Briefs]

While it's great fun to hunt down the wretched minions of Hell in PC and console games like the popular Doom, networkable games, where users can actually compete against other gamers from around the world, are emerging as the hot new online thing. Actually, networkable games have been the hot new thing for the last couple of years, but only now are service providers and electronic entertainment companies rushing to put such content online. Companies like Dwango, TEN and Mpath are offering dial-up pay services that focus primarily on network gaming while content providers like AOL and CompuServe are erecting multiplayer gaming areas on their respective services (The Games Channel and New Game City).

The 'Net Generation of Gaming



Consumers looking for low-cost access to the Internet, with an emphasis on online gaming, will be interested in **Sega's Saturn Net Link,** a $400 gaming unit that can hook up to any ordinary television set. The unit offers 28.8kbps access, a keyboard link and operability with any of 30 major ISPs. Look for it late September. Also this fall, look for the **Bandai @World Pippin**-based appliance ($599). It was jointly developed with Apple Computers, and offers a base unit with a power PC chip, quad-speed CD-ROM, controllers and television VGA support.

There may only be an estimated 30 million users connected to the Internet worldwide, but according to publishers at Osborne/McGraw-Hill, one million of them have purchased **Harley Hahn's** ***Internet Yellow Pages***, making it the first 'net-related book to pass the million-copies-sold mark. A best-selling paperback about the Internet? *Oooh,* the irony.

Internet Bestseller

[Sending Porn to Bob Dole...]

and Other Tricks to Show the Bandwidth Can't Be Ruled

DESPITE THE LEGAL THREATS DETAILED IN THE Communications Decency Act and the prudish gibber from a number of high-handed Capitol Hill legislators that helped draft the law, the curbing of indecency on the Internet is emerging as an effort equal in infeasibility as prohibiting alcohol with the 18th Amendment.

It's rather telling that, according to fight-censorship-digest publisher Declan McCullagh, the once-stable use of vulgarity on Usenet groups has doubled since the passing of the CDA. Using a research service at **http://www.dejanews.com**, McCullagh found that the illegal and "indecent" words "fuck," "shit" and "piss" were used 20 percent more in the first month subsequent to the CDA's passage.

Breaking the law is a step in the right direction says David Fenton, publisher of the Digital Disobedience Web site at **http://www.InterActivism.com**. Fenton, also president of the PR firm Fenton Communications, developed the site as a way to target and protest companies polluting the environment, countries violating human rights and, yes, legislators passing backward Internet regulations.

"We thought we could aggregate social action on the 'net and create an easy way for people to find social activist groups," says Fenton, who is no stranger to social and political activism. During the 1970s, he published an underground newspaper in Ann Arbor that broke the story on ozone-destroying CFCs and was instrumental in helping elect the city's first black mayor. Fenton also had a hand in producing the 1979 No-Nukes concert with musicians Bruce Springsteen, Jackson Browne and Bonnie Raitt. He's also worked closely with activists at Greenpeace, Nelson Mandela and the late Abbie Hoffman.

Fenton, with Nelson Mandela

While Digital Disobedience is his first foray into Internet publishing, Fenton's knack for raising hell translates well onto the digital landscape—the site offers users a more graphically dynamic and interactive interface than most non-profit group pages on the Web. The most amusing component to the site is its invitation to visitors to literally break the CDA by e-mailing "indecent" materials to Bob Dole, including graphic illustrations of how to use a condom, a list of abortion clinics in the U.S. and excerpts from House Speaker Newt Gingrich's "naughty" novel, *1945*, which begins with a scene involving an adulterous chief of staff in bed with his Swedish mistress.

"We also plan to build in forums and discussion groups for people by subject area of interest," adds Fenton. "We also have three principle actions on the site and we're going to start rotating one of the three each week or so." At press time, the three principle "actions" included the aforementioned CDA protest, a challenge to Congress' slackening on pesticide laws and a fundraising effort for the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL) to oppose Dole's stated intentions to take away a woman's right to choose.

If the activists are not successful in their efforts to block the CDA, Fenton's site would certainly be deemed "indecent." Presently, the Justice Department has chosen not to investigate or prosecute violations of the CDA until the matter is settled in court, as explained on Fenton's site. But will Fenton shut down Digital Disobedience in the event that courts rule in favor of the CDA? "Thomas Paine, Abbie Hoffman, Martin Luther King wouldn't have stopped their civil disobedience, no matter what the law said," insists Fenton. "If the law is clearly unjust and clearly wrong, then we think we have the right to protest and have a duty to do so."

[Death Be Not Proud]

Controversial Site Raises Questions about Images of Violence Online

THE QUICKTIME BLACK-AND-WHITE LOOP SHOWS THE men lined up, blind-folded. The camera then catches the silent shots of a firing squad and the men slump forward in eerie stillness. The loop starts again, displaying the men's death over and over.

For $10 a month, those 18 and older can watch dozens of other disturbing loops, ranging from a murderous torture in Haiti, a fatal shooting with an AK-47 and a brutal killing in Bosnia at DeathNews, a site launched in late May at **http://www.deathnews.com/** The site's creator, 29-year-old Edward Bronson also plans an online zine about death, historical stories about infamous murderers in history and even contests in which users win tours of serial killers' homes.

Edward Bronson, founder of DeathNews

Bronson, formerly a lawyer who represented professional athletes, has also been involved with the production of infommercials. In fact, it was his involvement with *Death: The Ultimate Horror*, a direct-to-video release of real-life gruesome deaths that led him to create DeathNews.

He argues that the site is not just sensationalistic, but has purpose. "We are trying to sensitize people to what's going on in the rest of the world. I got pissed off by what was being censored off the network news, information and stories and clips," Bronson says. "Then, along with some of the Internet censorship that's going on in Congress, I thought that someone has to stand up and fight for what you have a right to see." And for many, it's healthy for them to see it, Bronson insists.

Not everyone shares his view. Among them, Michael Kearl, author of *Endings: A Sociology of Death and Dying* (Oxford University Press, 1989) and a professor of sociology at Trinity University in Texas. Kearl calls the site a prime example of "pornographic death."

"As sex becomes pornographic when detached from the normal human emotion of love, so such expositions of death become pornographic when detached from the emotion of grief," Kearl says.

Death sites on the Internet vary as much as the manner in which people can die. Fore instance, DeathNet (profiled on page 42), is a sensitive, respectful site that seeks to change right-to-die laws. Intelligent discourse by sociologists and psychologist also exists on the 'net, such as Kearl's own site at **http://www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/death.html** and the Project on Death in America at **http://www.soros.org/death.html.** Sites such as DeathNews, however, disturbs many users because death is not discussed in any particular context, but rather is shown purely for its now and then brutality.

Admittedly, there's something in all of us that makes us linger as we pass by that horrible car crash, craning our necks for a view. It may not be healthy or good, but the 'net, like all media, is driven by what interests users. Like some kinds of sex, death is both forbidden and fascinating, Kearl says.

"Unlike most of human history, we are largely divorced from the sights and smells of death. Phenomena such as this are consequences of a death-denying culture where death is a taboo," Kearl says. "Like all taboos, they elicit certain fetishes. And consider the cultural context of [DeathNews], e.g., where television news is governed by the 'if it bleeds it leads' strategy for viewership." **—KF**

[Is it Worth it?]

LEXIS-NEXIS
http://www.lexis-nexis.com/

The numbers are staggering: 80 million documents, 6,200 databases, 3 million new documents a year, some 7,100 news and business sources.

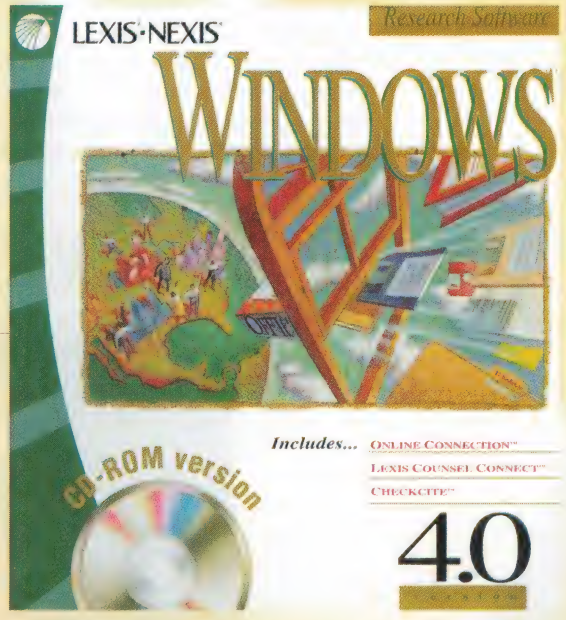
The world of databases begins and ends with Lexis-Nexis, rightly billed as the "world's premier" online legal, news and business information service.

The prices, unfortunately, are also staggering. A number of varied and customized pricing plans exist. For details visit **http://psweb1.lexis-nexis.com:80/lncc/about/pricing.html,** but suffice it to say their rates make AOL look like a charity.

Lexis-Nexis wisely follows the drug-dealer model of business. Free trial subscriptions are offered. Educational discounts are available and in fact the service is free to law students—all in hopes that once students reach the real world they'll be hooked.

It works. For information junkies, having access to the service's vast libraries is a pure rush. All the biggies are here: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, not to mention the property records for Johnson County, Tennessee and New Jersey's workers' compensation cases. In two hours we looked up ourselves, our co-workers, our company, our relatives and our friends—just think of the possibilities if we had actual research to do.

As for the question on the table, "Is it worth it?" Yes, it is—if you get your boss to pay for it. The truth is, Lexis-Nexis is simply not affordable for fanciful searches (i.e., "I wonder how many references there are to 'http?'" By the way, there are more than 87,000 at press time.) For lawyers, journalists and other information-dependent professionals, the service can be a Godsend, one that's all the more divine when you're not footing the bill.



Weird ON THE WEB

THE NAKED DANCING LLAMA

http://www.execpc.com/~cfeyrer/ndl.html

Why a llama? The site's creator, Chris Feyrer, explains. "Llamas grab my attention for some reason. You think 'cow, cow, cow (yawn).... llama...llama?! Where?' They also are nice and obscure, like the emu and the ferret. Hmm. And they dance like you would not believe," Feyrer says. But a llama alone would not capture the imagination of a nation like the one on Feyrer's site. Evidently, by adding "naked" and "dancing" to the mix, he stumbled onto something. Feyrer says that his Naked Dancing Llama (NDL) has inspired people across the country to don NDL for President T-shirts and preach the wisdom of the llama. "A friend of mine who uses the pseudonym Xanthippe came up with FONDL, Friend of Naked Dancing Llama...kind of an unofficial fan club. Other netsurfers are realizing they should have been asking llamas the solutions to their problems long ago." We weren't quite so sure if the llama could answer ours, especially since all the tidbits of wisdom from the Hoofed One seem to have something to do with either frolicking or licking, such as this bit of llama lore: "Licking salt is no substitute for a good macadamia."

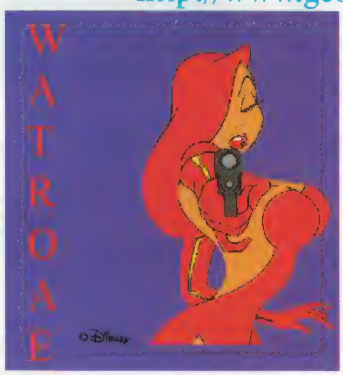
MIKE AND ANTHONY'S WIRED ROOM

http://138.247.124.69/room/

Mike Bitz and Anthony Anderberg share a dorm room at the University of South Dakota. Small and cramped, it would be otherwise unremarkable except that these two programming majors "wired" their room so that visitors can turn on their fan, find out the room's temperature at any given moment and shut the hallway door. It takes some hard-core geeks to come up with such a site, we thought, so we checked out their bios. We were right. Anthony notes that he "enjoys canoeing, astronomy, bicycling, circuit building, weightlifting, **Perl scripting** and Metallica concerts." Metallica figures heavily in this site, with many references in the pair's highly entertaining FAQ. Therein, they answer such pressing questions as "What's the coolest Metallica song of all time?" ("Master of Puppets") and "What's the capital of Iceland?" (Reykjavik).

W.A.T.R.O.A.E

http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/1675/index.html



Women Are the Root of All Evil? Male or female, woman-hater or avid feminist, you'll likely be amused with this page, as misguided misogyny always makes for a fun, cheap laugh. In the words of the author, "The W.A.T.R.O.A.E. organization was mainly set up to warn other males about the evils of women, to provide comfort to those males who have to deal with women on a daily basis, to try not to understand women, and most importantly to try to provide alternative solutions to the survival of man with the extinction of women." As an added bonus, there's a frighteningly awful story about 200 dead monkeys. So do *we* believe women are the root of all evil? Examine our masthead (page 6) for the answer. Notice all the women there...?

CIGARS I HAVE SMOKED

http://www.eecs.uic.edu/~kcochran/cigar_diary.txt

It takes a moment of great inspiration to dedicate a Web site to some form of personal consumption. The Webmaster shares his experiences in diary form with different types of cigars from Hemingways to smokes of the "illegal" variety such as Upmann Petit Coronas. Each smoking experience, from light up to the last toke, is presented with ambient detail. You'll smell the Caribbean Sea as you read the text. A lot of the smoking stories revolve around the Webmaster's wedding. But stogie stories are the extent of any potentially erotic honeymoon prose you'll find here. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY OFFICE OF HUMAN RADIATION EXPERIMENTS HOME PAGE

http://www.ohre.doe.gov

The Office of Human Radiation Experiments, formed in March 1994, created this site to keep the public informed of Cold War experiments that were conducted on humans. Sound tasty? You haven't seen anything yet. Original documents detailing experiments and governmental approval to conduct them make *The X-Files* look like *The Brady Bunch*. Just what do these documents say? Try this: "If it is felt by the contractor that the program involving experimentation with human subjects will be of ultimate interest or value to the Atomic Energy Commission it is suggested that such program be prepared for submittal to the Commission for their approval." This site includes photos, archived information and a telephone number to call if you think you may have been involved in radiation experiments yourself.

SENSORIA KOLLECTIV

http://www.tezcat.com/~sensoria/SensoriaKollectiv.html#anchor651068

The 'zine *Sensoria Kollectiv* is a collection of amusements that will startle your senses. Narratives, images and experiments, such as *Red Asphalt*, a tantalizing J.G. Ballard-inspired project that couples car-crash stories and disturbing photographs of accident victims, are creatively and thoughtfully presented. *Sensoria's* theme is dark and shocking—not for the weak-of-heart. Don't be fooled by links such as "Hostess Fruit Pies." You're not getting what you think you are, unless you've checked out the rest of the 'zine already. The multimedia and Project One sound features are not to be missed.

THE JOHN GOTTI TRIBUTE PAGE

http://ng.netgate.net/~ravenna/gotti.html

Oddly affectionate tribute to Jon Gotti, "alleged mob boss but all-around nice guy." Start with the partially bleeped sound clip of Gotti graphically threatening some poor slob, then proceed to loving testimonials from his former neighbors, who miss his annual shindigs. One mission of the page is to free Gotti, "currently serving a life sentence in virtual solitary without the possibility of parole at one of the worst prisons in the United States, the lockdown Marion Control Unit Federal Penitentiary," the site's author notes. Highlights are summaries of Gotti-inspired made-for-TV movies and updates on the alleged unfairness of Gotti's trial. We admit we weren't sure if this page was written tongue in cheek. Celebrity worship is totally in vogue, though, and if you can stomach the occasional barbarities of running with the mafioso crowd, this devoted Gotti-watch might be right up your alley.

THE SEA MONKEYS WORSHIP PAGE

http://haven.uniserve.com/~sbarclay/seamonk.htm

Surely you remember the ads from the pages of your childhood comic books. Who could resist Sea-Monkeys, frolicking underwater like Neptune, complete with little crowns and scepters? This page notes, "Sea-Monkeys® are amazing pets, portable, active, disposable...Watch them as they are born—watch them as they grow—watch them as they raise small families in the plastic tank you are supplied with! Just remember that they don't appear exactly as illustrated!" (Duh!) Although hope springs eternal, let's acknowledge that what springs from those packets of "Instant Life" are plain ol' brine shrimp. That aside, visit the Worship Page to find bad poetry and tales of woe regarding tragic Sea-Monkey mishaps, i.e., "I ate my Sea-Monkeys!"

Classic Weird on the Web

SQUASHED BUG ZOO

http://squashed.roach.org/zoo.html

If you're the type who goes for long drives on the highway just to see what kind of insects will splatter on your windshield, then you'll love spending hours wandering around the virtual cages of the Squashed Bug Zoo. You'll thrill at the high-quality scans of flattened house flies, ticks, beetles and our personal favorite, the "small indistinguishable blood spot, tentatively guessed at being a fly." Actually calling the site the Squashed Bug Zoo is a misnomer now that the small vertebrate section has opened, housing such treasures as a mouse, a rat and the crowd-pleasing "little (2") critter I found stuck on the outside of a shipping box from Fujitsu in Japan." The site, the brainchild of Londoner Matthew Collins, lacks even the basest entomological data, but hey, when you have such high-quality scans as a blood-engorged tick flattened by a ball-peen hammer, a picture *more* than speaks a thousand words. Best of all, if your favorite pest is not yet represented in the hallowed halls of squashdom, Collins readily accepts new scans of all creatures small and squashed.

TODD'S GALLERY OF PATHETIC HUMAN REGRET

http://www.eden.com/~tfast/regret1.html

Todd has alphabetized a life of regrets here. Some regrets are serious. ("I regret that we knocked over the bird nest above [the] garage and the baby birds fell all over the ground and were hurt.") Some are lewdly sincere. ("To Holly, a voluptuous teen: I wasn't able to see you taking a shower through the fence at night like my friend David said he could.") Some are just plain nutty ("To Ken: I regret not enjoying it more when your father held you down and insisted that your sister be allowed to bite you in retaliation for you biting her.") Overall, Todd's chronicle of missed opportunities showcases a world of knives, rebellion, heavy-metal music, thoughtfulness, snot, one-upsmanship and the '80s. Voyeurs will get a thrill; others will feel slightly disturbed at the frank tone and confessions within.

THE SATANIC SIDE OF THE WEB

http://www.greyware.com/authors/pitman/hell.htm

We're not really sure who would hire Satan, but he's looking for some new employment, according to this site. But then, who can blame him when you read the way he describes the job he's held since 7000 B.C. "I hate to break the news to you, but I'm basically a bureaucrat," the site says. "No fancy bets over people like Job, no appearing to religious fanatics in the middle of the desert and offering them kingdoms. I'm a paper pusher." Yes, that's right: Satan is a dweeb. His office is much like everyone else's corporate digs, complete with Dilbert cartoons tacked to the door. He even has to go outside his office to smoke (although luckily, most of Hell is a designated smoking area). His credentials seem pretty impressive: Harvard MBA, law degree from Yale and of course, he was the former "Right Hand of God." Like most job hunters, he glosses over the one job from which he was fired on his resume, noting that he left Heaven over "creative differences" to strike out on his own as a consultant. He boasts many accomplishments as an entrepreneur, from the Black Plague, the fall of Rome, the Inquisition, slavery, Pauly Shore and 3-D movies. But still, Satan remembers his job at hand, namely collecting souls for eternal damnation. In this case, he makes it easy. If your browser supports forms, you can just fill out a few blanks, hit a submit button and voilá—you've made a deal with the devil!

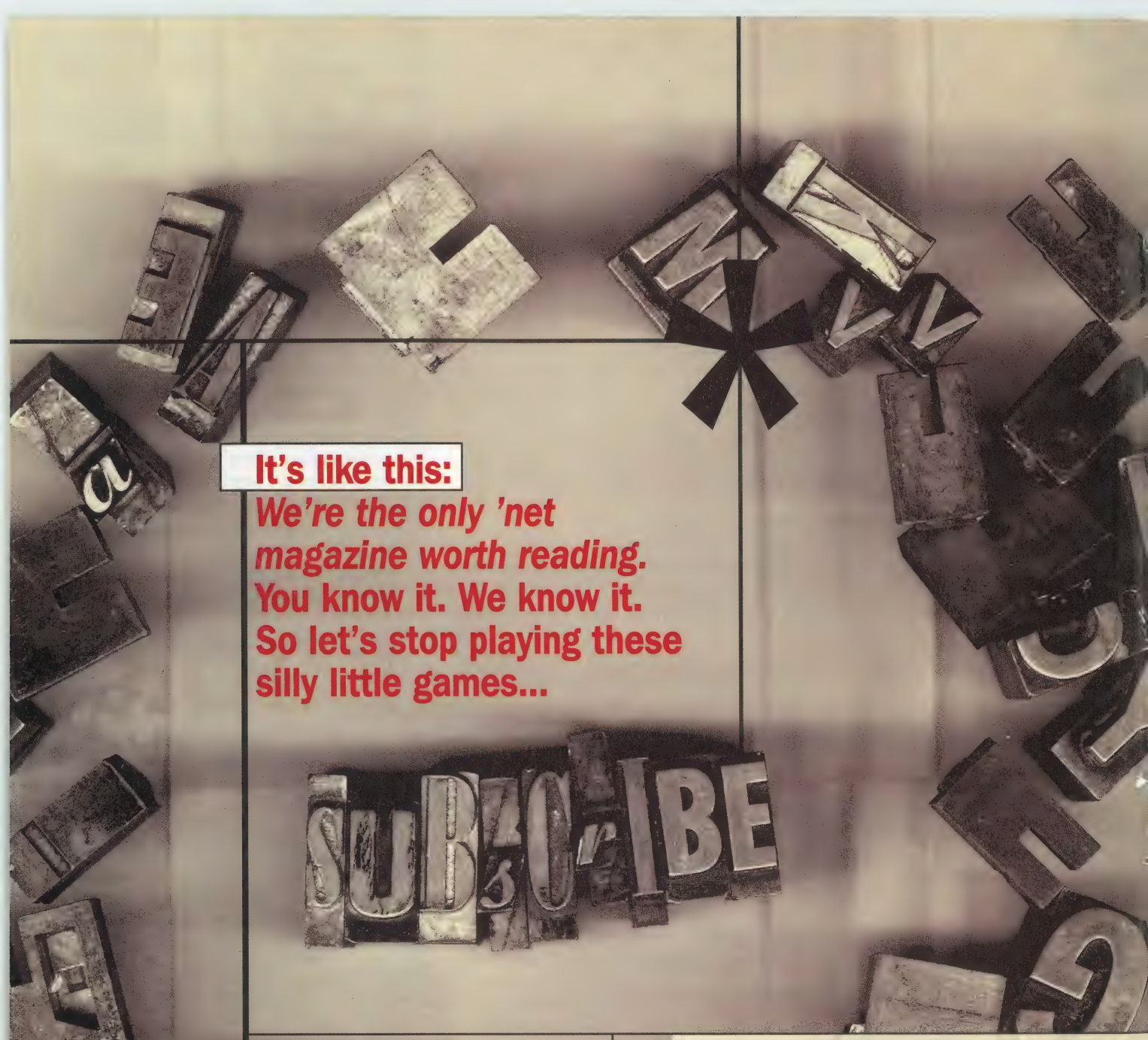
KOOK du jour

Learn about Corky Ra and the modern practice of the ancient religion of Summum at http://www.summum.org/welcome.htm

What's Summum? The site's introduction explains: "In the fall of 1975, Claude 'Corky' Nowell began to have a series of encounters with highly intelligent beings who he now refers to as the Summa Individuals. He describes them as beings who untiringly work the pathways of spiritual evolution, and who were referred to as the 'Neters' in the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. During his encounters, he received instructions concerning the underlying principles (Laws of Nature) which establish and maintain the universe." Soon after his initial experience, Corky founded a non-profit organization, giving it the name Summum, a Latin term meaning "the sum total of all creation." Corky later changed his name to Summum Bonum Amen Ra (he goes by Corky Ra).

Summum believes in the collective application of wine, meditation, sex, and mummification combined with the power of pyramids to help attain true understanding and harmony in life. "The Summa Individuals gave Corky instructions to build pyramids and produce Nectar Publications, wines especially created by fermentation and aging within a pyramid that students of the philosophy transform through psychokinesis and imbue with conceptual information," the site notes. You can even see a photo of the pyramid, located in Salt Lake City.

During the mid-1980s, the Summum reintroduced the art of Mummification. "Mummification allows for permanent preservation of the body so that the soul of the departed can be guided by means of the science known as 'Transference,'" the site notes. "The departed spirit is assisted in its evolution by guidance from those still embodied and those spirit guides working the pathways of spiritual evolution. We also provide Mummification as an option in the funeral industry to all interested individuals regardless of their philosophical or religious persuasions."



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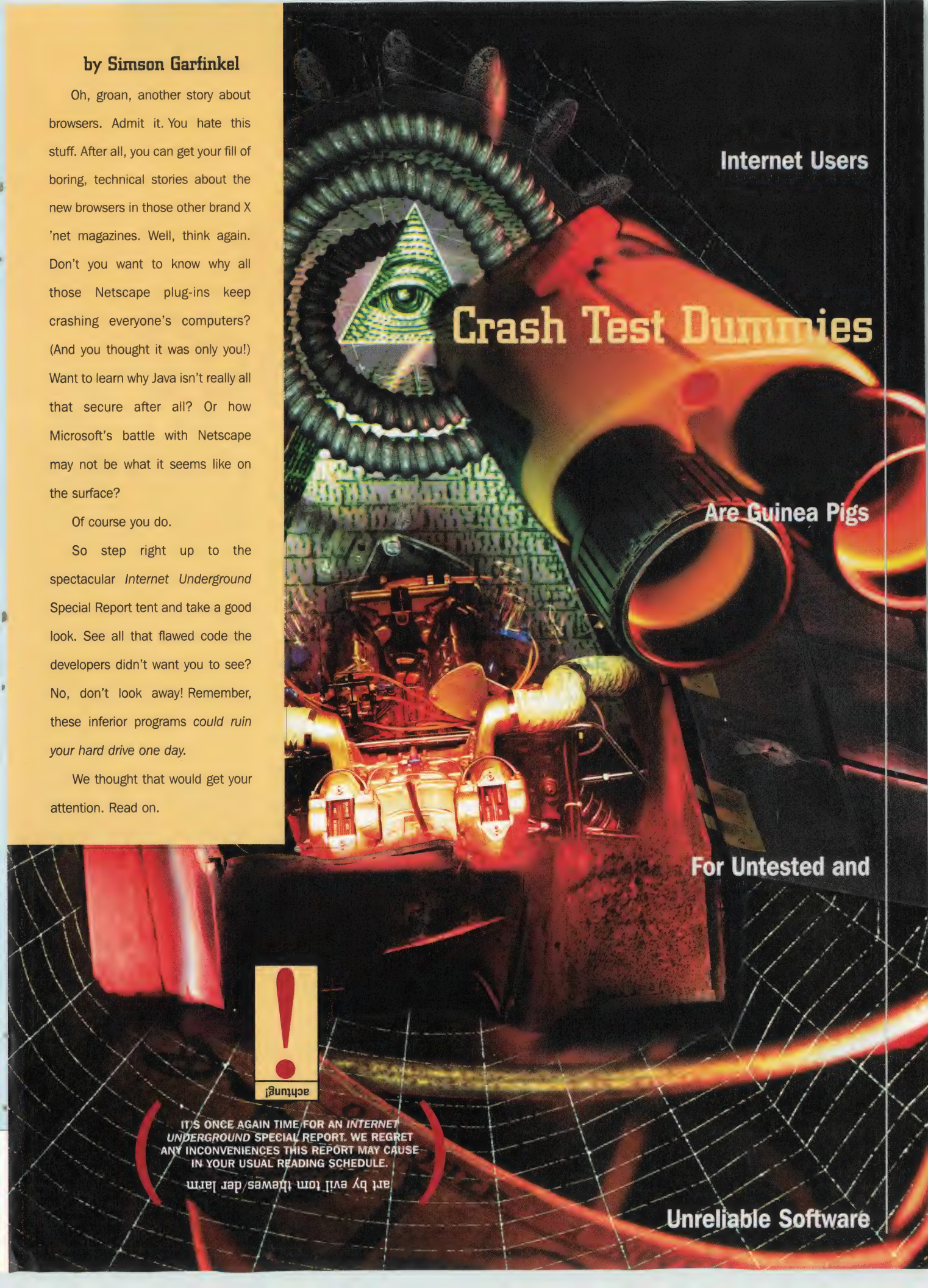
Internet Users Crash Test Dummies Are Guinea Pigs For Untested and Unreliable Software



by Simson Garfinkel

Oh, groan, another story about browsers. Admit it. You hate this stuff. After all, you can get your fill of boring, technical stories about the new browsers in those other brand X 'net magazines. Well, think again. Don't you want to know why all those Netscape plug-ins keep crashing everyone's computers? (And you thought it was only you!) Want to learn why Java isn't really all that secure after all? Or how Microsoft's battle with Netscape may not be what it seems like on the surface?

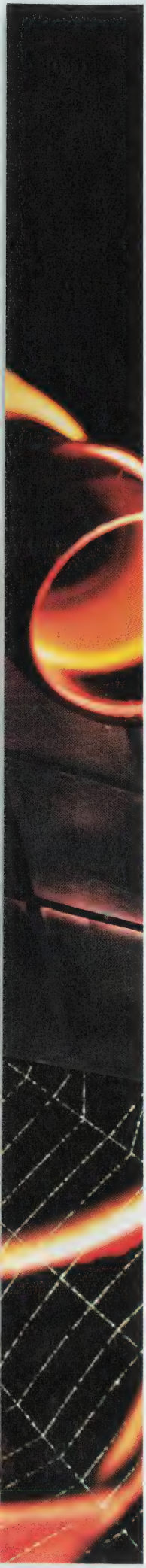
Of course you do.

So step right up to the spectacular *Internet Underground* Special Report tent and take a good look. See all that flawed code the developers didn't want you to see? No, don't look away! Remember, these inferior programs *could ruin your hard drive one day.*

We thought that would get your attention. Read on.

IT'S ONCE AGAIN TIME FOR AN *INTERNET UNDERGROUND* SPECIAL REPORT. WE REGRET ANY INCONVENIENCES THIS REPORT MAY CAUSE IN YOUR USUAL READING SCHEDULE.

art by evil tom tlewes/der larm



part one:

Web Browsers: Everything that you have been told about the war between the browsers is wrong

Unsafe At Any Speed?

There is a war brewing in the world of the Web browsers, but if you think that the battle is between Netscape and Microsoft, you're missing the story.

Oh, sure, Netscape and Microsoft are duking it out. At stake is nothing less than the future of the desktop computer environment. Netscape hopes that control of network protocols will make Microsoft's hold on operating systems irrelevant. To accomplish this, Netscape is banking on its early entry into the field with superior technology—the Netscape Navigator and its "secure" Commerce Server.

Microsoft, meanwhile, is using a strategy that's worked well for the Seattle Goliath before: Come late to market to learn from your competitor's mistakes, put more money into marketing than technology and never give up.

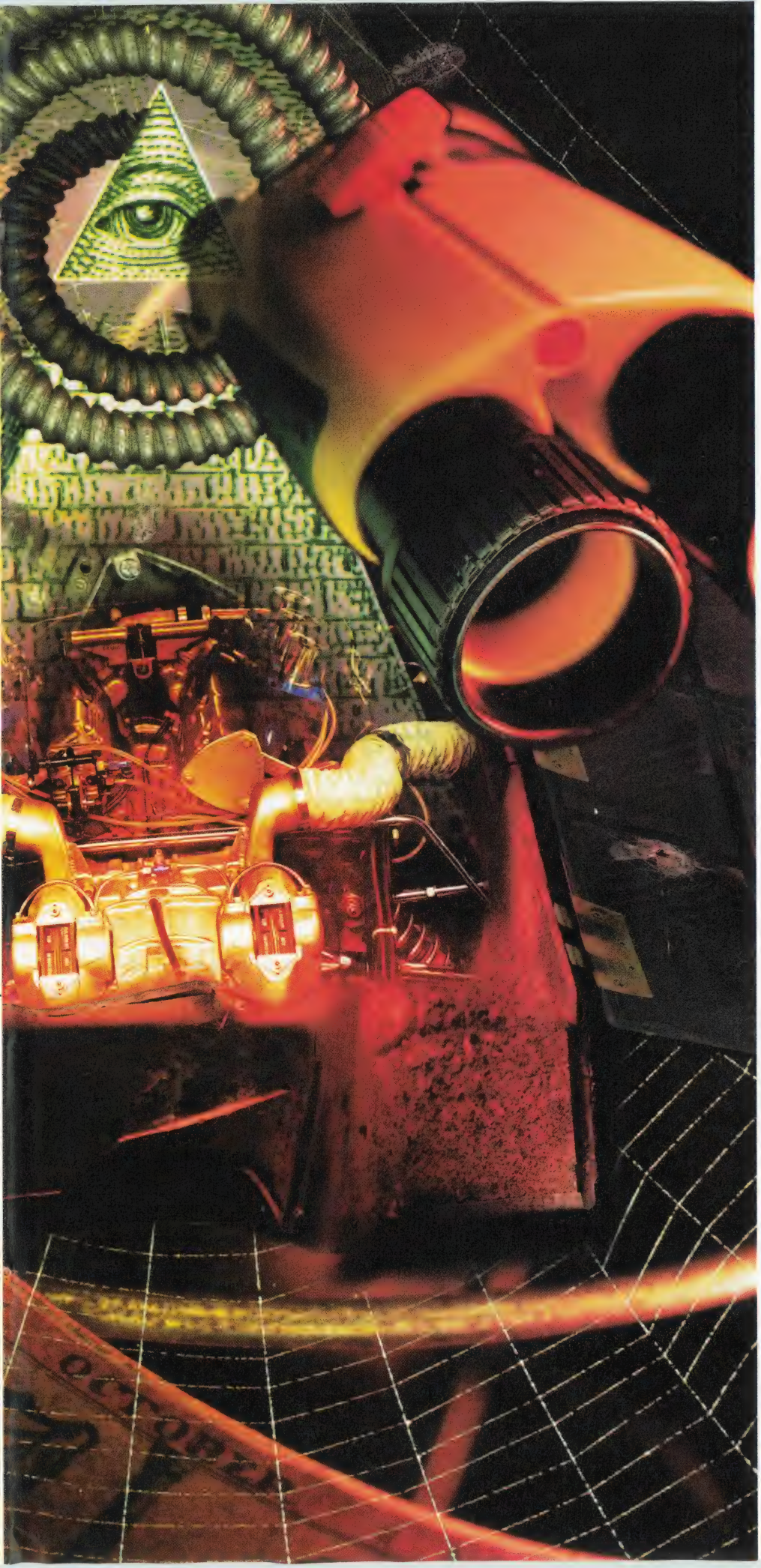
This explains why Netscape is trying to sell Navigator for $49.95, while Microsoft is giving away its Internet Explorer Web browser for free. Netscape may have a superior product today, but Microsoft has more than 60 programmers closing in fast on Netscape's 18 to be that its Explorer will eventually match the Navigator browser feature-for-feature. Who then will spend money on Navigator when Explorer is free?

If you really care about the future of the Internet, the skirmish between the browsers is a sideshow. The true war now unfolding is between the companies trying to commercialize the Web and the truly malicious hackers who would like to see the whole thing collapse under its own weight while making a fast buck. Meanwhile, it's the users—you and me—who will likely make this bad situation worse. How? By demanding and depending on new features that are fundamentally insecure. As a result, expect the hackers to win more than a few battles before the year is out.

<THE CURSE OF HTML>

Five years after the birth of the Web, the HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is beginning to show its age. HTML was designed for one purpose: to put physics papers on the Internet to replace scientific journals with Web pages. For the physicists, text, images and links were the only things they needed. Five years later, most Web pages offer little more.

The next big breakthrough was the realization that HTML could easily be encoded for other kinds of "objects" that appear on a computer screen: buttons, text fields, check-boxes and so on. This birth of forms gave Web surfers the ability to run a program over the Internet from a remote computer.



That's what happens every time you search for a Web page on Lycos or AltaVista: the computer at the other end of the Internet displays a little form on your screen, you fill in the fields, click a button, and then another program runs on the remote computer and shows you the results. Want to do another search? Simply fill out another form and click another button.

There's nothing new about this style of computing: IBM was doing it back in the '70s in what was called "block mode." People didn't like it very much, which is one of the reasons that minicomputers running UNIX and PCs running DOS became so much more popular than IBM's mainframes.

Today companies are coming to the same conclusion with respect to the Web: Block mode sucks. Last year, Netscape introduced the idea of adding animation to a Web page, using a process that displays a series of images in the same spot on your screen, one after another. Although crude, it worked, sort of like one of those flip-book "movies" from the 1920s. But to keep your interest, companies building a presence on the Internet want to offer you more; they want to give you pages that go *Whiz!* when you click on them. They want to sell you interactive, multi-user aerial dogfights and tank battles. They want spreadsheets downloaded onto your desktop to show you how much money you'll make by investing in their mutual funds.

And they know how to do it: custom programming. HTML is fine as far as it goes. But in order to create a truly engrossing experience that will make you want to part with your hard-earned cash, Web companies are going to have to download code onto your hard drive and run it on your CPU.

The funny thing is, the hackers want to do the same thing.

<INTO THE FRAY>

Microsoft believes that the best way to dominate the Web is to leverage its dominance in the world of desktop computing. This strategy started late last year, with the release of Microsoft's Internet Assistant for Word. Assistant works as an extension for the word processing program that allows you to browse the Web, download a page, edit it, then save it in HTML. You can also use Assistant to save regular Word files in HTML format, too.

Internet Assistant may be cool, but it isn't the best way to write Web pages. Microsoft Word doesn't really understand HTML. What's needed instead is a program that's designed from the ground up to edit Web pages and save them directly to your server. (Graphically managing the location of all of the pages on your site and searching for bad links would be kind of nice, too.) A few months ago, Microsoft didn't have a program that did all of these things, but a small Cambridge, Mass., company did. That's why Microsoft bought Vermeer in January. Today you can download Front Page from Microsoft's Web site. Already, Netscape's Navigator Gold is losing

mindshare. Problem solved.

Now Microsoft is focusing on interactivity and once again, the giant is playing catch-up. Last year, Netscape licensed and then built into its 2.0 browser Sun Microsystems' Java language, a nifty system designed to download small programs over the Internet to Web browsers. Now dozens of books line store shelves, ready to teach people the tricks to writing code in this strange and wondrous new language.

Despite this literary outpouring, there are still remarkably few Java programmers loose in the world. Until this summer, there

was only one developer environment for the language. I have yet to see a decent Java debugger. For the foreseeable future, writing Java programs will be hard work.

This is Microsoft's chance.

Although Microsoft licensed Java last December, the company is striving to assure that the real future for interactivity on the Internet falls within traditional PC programming. "I've got several million folks who have invested time, technology and support learning all about Microsoft technologies," says Shawn Morrissey, a product manager inside Microsoft's Internet Tools group. Microsoft plans to prompt those programmers into building active Web pages.

For people who aren't trained in the ordeals of C++ programming, Microsoft is embedding its Visual Basic programming language into its Web browser and server. What this means in English is that mere mortals will be able to create active pages without having to learn complicated new programming languages like Perl or Python.

ActiveX is the second half of Microsoft's strategy. ActiveX is a reinvention of Microsoft's ubiquitous OLE (Object-Linking and Embedding) technology for the Web. OLE is what lets you put an Excel spreadsheet inside a Microsoft Word document and edit it in place. On a Web server, ActiveX will allow you to put the results from your spreadsheet into your home page. On an ActiveX-equipped Web browser, such as Internet Explorer, Web surfers will be able to download the spreadsheet itself and run it on their own computers.

To understand how all of this might work, imagine that Berkeley Systems has a new Web-based screen saver. You click to their Web site, but instead of painstakingly downloading their new application and double-clicking to install, your browser senses that the screen saver is available as an OLE component—that is, a piece of code that makes OLE objects work. Before you know what's going on, your browser has downloaded the OLE component, installed a new DLL in your \WINDOWS directory, and off you go with your new screen saver. It's as if the entire Internet suddenly became a single computer running Windows 95.

If you think that this sounds a lot like Netscape's plug-in architecture, you're partially right. But there's an important difference: Developers won't have to write their code from scratch. Instead, they'll be able to use their old Windows apps.

Now you know why Microsoft is giving Internet Explorer away for free.

<PRACTICAL INSECURITY>

ActiveX isn't only a boon to Microsoft: It's also a key technology for malicious hackers eager to wipe out your workstation.

"Once an ActiveX component is on your hard drive, there is nothing that you can stop it from doing," says Frank Chen, Netscape Corporation's Security Product Manager. For example, says Chen, an ActiveX component could easily format your hard disk, erasing all of your data. Or it could search through your files and directories for sensitive information and transmit them on the Internet.

This January, First Virtual demonstrated a program that the company affectionately called "Card Shark." Disguised as a screen saver, Card Shark would scan the keyboard until the user typed a credit-card number. It would then wake up and display the credit-card number on a screen. The company said that it would have been just as easy to have the program quietly post the credit-card numbers on the Usenet.

Computer users have known about these potential problems for a long time. That's one of the reasons why Java has garnered so much excitement. Java is supposed to solve these nasty problems before they start. A Java program simply *can't* format your hard disk, because it's not really running on your computer. Instead, it's running inside a tiny "virtual machine" which has a limited number of instructions. "Format the hard disk" isn't one of them.

"You can turn particular features on and off, because of the security manager in the browser," says Chen.

At least, that's the theory. In practice, a group of researchers at Princeton University have found a whole host of security problems with the current implementation of Java, the one that's inside the Netscape browser. Last spring, Edward W. Felten—working with two graduate students, Drew Dean and Dan S. Wallach—quietly publicized a series of security problems with the Netscape Navigator's Java implementation. Each time, Netscape fixed the hole and placed a "patched" version of their browser up on the Netscape FTP server.

'There's no such thing as an absolutely secure computer, except perhaps one that is not plugged in.'

But the researchers at Princeton aren't impressed. Although security problems should be expected in any new program, the flaws in Java and Netscape Navigator are symptomatic of far deeper problems. "These flaws arise for several reasons, including implementation errors, unintended interactions between browser features, differences between the Java language and bytecode semantics and weaknesses in the design of the language and the bytecode format," proclaimed a paper presented by the team at the IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy this past May.

(Bytecode is the actual stuff that's downloaded to your browser when you are running a Java applet.)

After studying Sun's HotJava and Netscape's Navigator for some months this past spring, the team at Princeton figured a way to bypass Java's security entirely and

run arbitrary machine code within the browser. Java—at least the Java inside Netscape Navigator 2.0—was no more secure than Microsoft's planned ActiveX. But it was probably more dangerous because users had been told that Java was secure. As a result, they might take more chances.

The government's Naval Research Lab, which sets computer security policy for a large chunk of the U.S. Military, was particularly disturbed by the revelation. "The NRL Information Systems Security Office recommends that use of all Netscape products be disallowed on computers NRL-wide," wrote Rick Perry, NRL's IS Security Officer, in an internal memorandum. "It should also be noted that Netscape versions prior to 2.0 have reported security problems. Even though Netscape claimed to have fixed those earlier problems, the fact that new security vulnerabilities continue to be reported in subsequent releases leads us to conclude that all versions of Netscape are suspect from a security standpoint and should not be used on NRL computers."

<TRUST THE CODE>

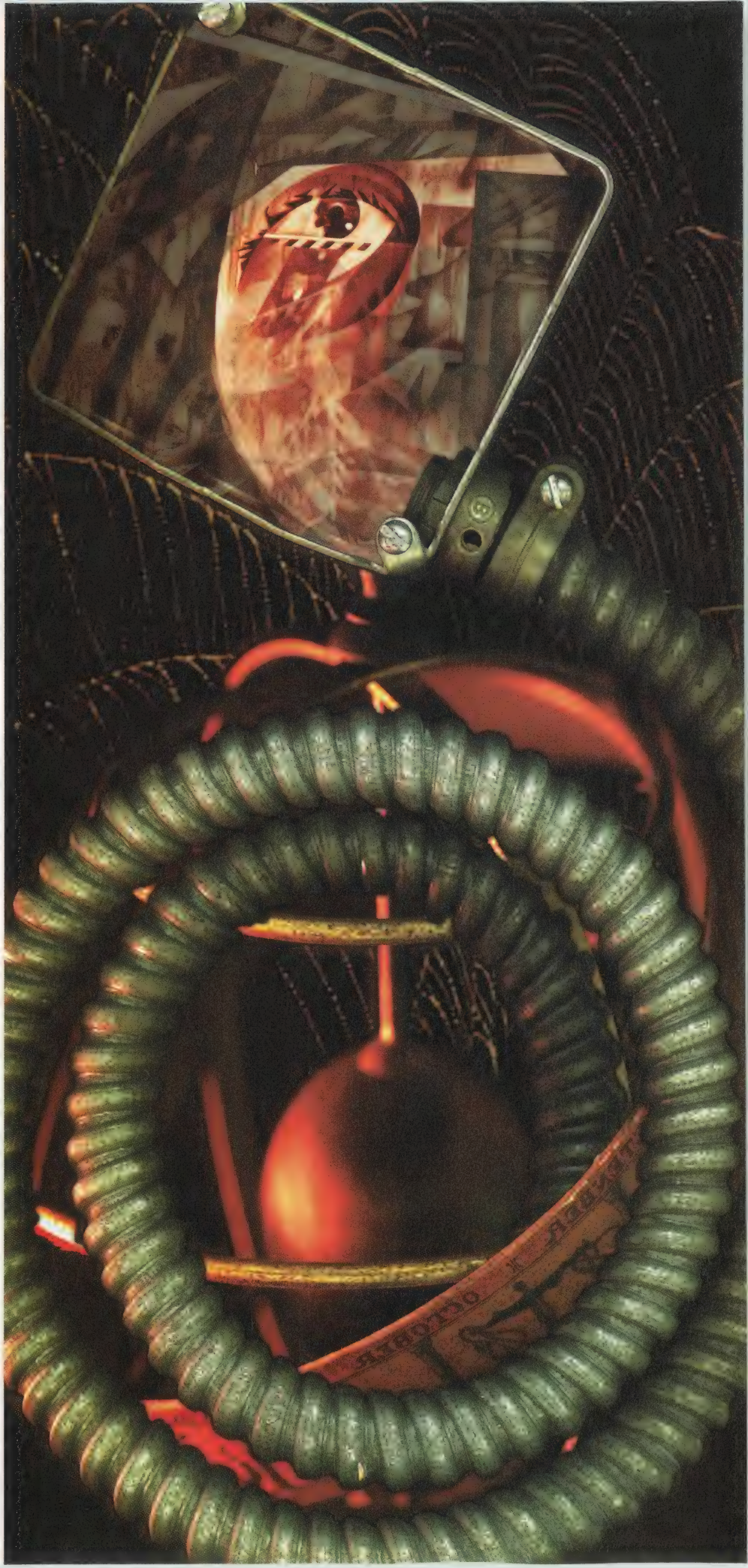
This problem of rogue applications isn't a new one with Web browsers: Every time you buy a new piece of software, then plop the floppy disk into your computer's drive, there's always a risk that the program won't be well behaved. Nevertheless, people buy and run programs like Microsoft Project, even though they realize that the program could go berzerk and wipe out all of the files on their computer.

Why do people trust shrink-wrapped software to work? They trust the name that's on the box. If you buy a box of shrink-wrapped software that says "Microsoft" on it, there's an overwhelmingly good chance that the Redmond, Wash., company created it.

There are no such assurances on the Internet. That's why a group of companies are now trying to bring that same level of guaranty to programs distributed through the ether using digital signatures. It's a step the 'net certainly needs. Earlier this year, a program called PKZIP30B.EXE was uploaded to many computers on the Internet. The program appeared to be the 3.0 Beta release of PKZIP, the popular disk compression program. But when unsuspecting users downloaded the program and tried to run it, the rogue program actually erased the user's hard disk. That didn't exactly do wonders for the reputation of PKWare, PKZIP's creator.

Digital signatures would have prevented the mishap with the PKZIP30B.EXE program. The rogue hackers who distributed the nasty program couldn't have signed it with PKWare's digital signature.

Digital signatures are based on public key cryptography, the same technology



used by programs like Pretty Good Privacy (PGP) to keep communications secret over the Internet. With public key systems, each person creates a public key and a secret key. To send somebody a message, you encrypt it with their public key. Once encrypted, only the person who possesses the matching secret key can decrypt the contents of the message. Digital signatures work the same way, but in reverse: You sign your digital signature on a document using your secret key. Once signed, anybody can verify the signature by trying to decode it with the matching public key.

What makes the whole system work is the digital notary, a company or organization that vouches for the authenticity of public keys. Most of the computer industry seems to be lining up behind VeriSign, a small company in Mountain View, Calif., that happens to be a spin-off from RSA Data Security, the company that holds the patent to PGP, the most popular form of public key cryptography available today. Both Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator have VeriSign's master public key built-in.

Digital signatures are what will protect Web surfers from downloading a rogue ActiveX component and having it trash their computer system, says Microsoft. Before an ActiveX component downloads, Internet Explorer will look for a digital signature certificate. The browser will then verify the key that signed the component and display the name on that key for the user's approval. If a piece of software then goes ahead and trashes your computer, at least you'll know who to sue.

"The whole idea behind digital signatures was not to provide a true safe environment," says Microsoft's Morrissey. "The idea behind digital signatures is that we can provide an audit trail."

"Microsoft and Netscape are taking widely varying strategies toward code signing for the Web," says Princeton's Wallach. "Microsoft, especially since they're shipping raw x86 code around, is looking at 'all or nothing'' models, mediated by digital signatures. Assuming you can prevent the log from getting corrupted, you hopefully have enough evidence to take somebody to court...Netscape seems to be taking the Java idea of partial [or] controlled access to filesystem and network resources to heart."

But like the folks at Microsoft, Wallach can't think of a better defense against rogue computer programs than lawsuits. "Ultimately," says Wallach, "we need the backing of the legal system." That's because there are simply too many opportunities for attack within a person's computer to depend on purely technological solutions.

For example, a company could obtain a VeriSign digital ID and distribute a very good, very cheap screen saver on the Internet using Microsoft's ActiveX technology. It might take months or years before people realize that the screen saver quietly grabs credit-card numbers, just like First Virtual's Card Shark. The program might even modify your copy of Windows, so that even after you think you have uninstalled it, it continues working unobserved. The rogue program could go further still, and erase your digital signature logfile. This way, there would be no legal proof that you ever downloaded and ran the company's screen saver in the first place.

But Java isn't immune either. According to the Princeton group, there is nothing to prevent a rogue Java applet from remaining dormant, waiting until another company's Java applet has been downloaded and started running, then killing the system's performance. This form of electronic warfare wouldn't hurt the user much—they would simply have to reboot their computer—but it would damage the reputation of the target company's products. According to the Princeton group, Java's creators at Sun don't think that this sort of denial-of-service attack is a serious problem. There is practically nothing inside Java to protect against it.

Experts agree that most of the attacks on the Internet—as well as most of the computer viruses of the '80s—were the result of rogue hacks and pranks. But that's likely to change in the coming year, as more of the banking and financial system can be accessed over the Internet with Web browsers.

"People download and run unsigned binaries today," says Drew Dean of the Princeton group. "Presumably they believe that the utility of doing so outweighs the risks. ActiveX will bring a set of risks with it. This is all about risk management, because there's no such thing as an absolutely secure computer, except perhaps the one that is not plugged in."

The problem that we face today is that few users know or understand much about risk management. "There are people who shouldn't run shareware," says Dean. "That class of people may increase in size. If your computer can spend your money, you probably want to be careful about whose software you run."

Instead, the new Java and ActiveX technologies are likely to do the reverse. They'll be encouraging people to download and run more programs at the very time when they start using their PC for online banking, electronic check writing and buying things over the Internet.

That's why the hackers are rejoicing.

part two:

Beta Blues

Or Why Your Plug-ins Crash Your System

They just don't make beta software the way they used to.

That's the conclusion that I've reached over the past few months after playing with the beta versions of Netscape's Navigator, Microsoft's Internet Explorer and dozens of plug-ins that unashamedly crash my system at the slightest provocation.

In the old days (before computer companies started distributing their programs on the Internet), most people agreed on what the word "beta" meant. Software developers followed more or less the same cycle of creating and releasing their programs to the general public. Back in those days, most people wouldn't be caught dead running beta software.

First came the prototype. A programmer or two would hack for a few weeks and come up with a model of what they wanted to build. The prototype might be slow; it might crash. It might even be written in Macromind Director. It didn't really matter: The purpose of the prototype wasn't to get customers, it was to get ideas and possibly funding.

Successful companies threw away their prototype and started developing a 1.0 release. This new program would take shape slowly: a menu here, a new option there. Eventually, a skeletal application would emerge that sort of worked. At some point, the programmers would create an "alpha" release. The alpha would be formally distributed within the company and perhaps shown to a few trusted clients (but never left for them to use). Most feedback would focus on the new features that people wanted to see.

Next would come the "feature freeze," in which the product's menus, commands, options and so forth were finalized for the 1.0 release. From this point on, the main goal of the programmers was to fix bugs.

Beta followed the feature freeze. A beta was a special version of the program distributed to the company's favorite customers, whose mission was to help the company find bugs in return for early access to the technology or for a substantial discount. Beta testing was hard work: some companies even paid their beta testers. A friend of mine, Pascal Chesnais at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Media Lab, once won a color inkjet printer from a computer company because he found more bugs in their beta release than anybody else. (I came in second.)

At the end of the beta period, programmers would categorize, rank and fix all of bugs that had been uncovered. Fixes would start, but at some point, the company would institute a "code freeze," after which no more changes would be made in the final shipping program. Bugs would still be reported and ranked, but instead of being fixed, they would merely be documented in the "Release Notes."

Why not fix a bug that somebody knows about? Sometimes, when you fix one bug, you actually introduce another. Unlike a hastily-written patch, a hastily-written set of release notes won't crash if somebody makes a stupid mistake, like leaving out an important comma. Freezing code avoids tempting fate.

<DEVELOPMENT IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET>

That's the way software used to be developed. The Internet has fundamentally changed the software and the whole process. Gone are the traditional notions of prototype, alpha, beta and release. Instead, now we have a coding frenzy and a steady stream of "betas" available by FTP.

These days, the very first words of advice given to any startup—"throw away your prototype"—are wrong. Companies that take the time to reinvent their core technology before hitting the market shrivel up and die, steamrollered by others who decided to hit the market instead of taking the time to "do it right." These hacks then use the revenue and mindshare that they got from that first burst of publicity to fund further development of their product. It's become a winning strategy to ship inferior code, provided that you can follow it up with a slightly improved version in a few weeks' time.

The alpha—that is, the first version of the program that sort of works—is now put up for download. Why hire a staff of quality assurance testers when there's a volunteer army on the Internet who will do your testing for free? Today's betas are really alpha-quality code, and that nifty Netscape plug-in you download will probably crash your computer after it has run for a few minutes (just long enough to get you hooked).

As things turn out, today's 1.0 releases are really just alphas too. The industry has lost the concept of "feature freeze" and "code freeze." Just look at the so-called betas for Netscape's 2.0 (and now 3.0) Navigator. With each new "release," fundamentally new features were added. JavaScript! Java! Certificates! But realistically, there's no way to fix bugs when you constantly add new features.

With the pace of the industry today, anybody who code freezes should have their head examined: Why document your bugs, when users are too lazy to read documentation? If somebody has a problem, just tell them to download the newest version! It won't fix their problem, but who cares? Look at all the new features.

...THIS HAS BEEN A TEST OF THE *INTERNET UNDERGROUND* SPECIAL REPORT SYSTEM. WE NOW CONTINUE WITH OUR REGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING...

by Michael McCormick

Invasion of the Internet Impostors

A lonely woman cruises net.singles looking for companionship, when she receives a very odd but intriguing reply from a fellow named Mark. A college student in Iowa chats over the Internet with his pen pal MGonz in Ireland, and ends up making confessions about his love life. A discussion of Middle Eastern politics turns ugly on Usenet when all the participants get "flamed" by a very angry Turk who calls himself Serdar Argic. During an interactive role-playing game, a mysterious woman named Julia appears out of the mist. When the other players question her, Julia wisecracks cryptically and then she disappears.

True-life encounters on the 'net, but with a common twist—Mark, MGonz, Serdar Argic and Julia are all devious computer programs, designed to fool you into believing they are human like you. They were spawned by artificial intelligence enthusiasts including hackers, AI researchers and even foreign spy agencies. And more of them are sneaking on to the Internet every day.

art by Richard Downs

Sure, they may just be circuitry, but computers can be better conversationalists than the people you meet online

Eliza Passes the Big Test

The seeds were sown 45 years ago when legendary computer science pioneer Alan Turing proposed the ultimate test for artificial intelligence. Essentially, the "Turing Test" throws a human judge into one room with a computer terminal. The judge then communicates with a person or a computer who remains unseen in another room throughout their online conversation. All conversations are conducted in ordinary human-speak (say English) on any variety of topics. After a half hour, the judge must guess whether the other participant is a computer or a human. A computer that consistently fools judges into believing it is human has achieved true artificial intelligence and is said to have passed the Turing Test.

Over the years, the Turing Test evolved into the Holy Grail of AI computer research. In 1991, the rivalry whipped into a frenzy with the introduction of the Loebner Prize. In the annual competition, New York businessman Hugh Loebner offers $100,000 to any researcher who can build an artificial intelligence system that genuinely fools human judges. So far, no computer system has consistently claimed the bounty by fooling judges into believing it was human—although a few humans have been mistaken for computers. The most recent Loebner contest was held in New York City on April 16, 1996. This year, newcomer Jason Hutchens' program HeX fared the best, although it also failed to take home the prize. HeX simulates a funny Australian personality, all of whose lively conversations invariably begin "G'day, mate!" You can read the contest transcripts, or even have your own conversation with HeX, by visiting Hutchens' Web page at **http://rama.ee.uwa.edu.au/~hutch/Hal.html.** You can have a conversation with the 1994 winner on the Web via **telnet://debra.dgbt.doc.ca:3000,** then choose "Sex Expert" at the menu. There is also general contest information available at **http://info.acm.org/~loebner/loebner-prize.html.**

The most infamous attempt to pass the Turing Test was devised by Joseph Weizenbaum of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, himself a charter member of the Loebner Prize Committee. He designed ELIZA, a simple program that mimicked natural English conversation yet contained no real artificial intelligence. When you talk to ELIZA, it just scans your input for key words or phrases that match its database, then randomly selects a canned response for that phrase. If no key phrase is found, it's programmed to make a vapid remark like "That is interesting, please tell me more." People sometimes encounter ELIZA running at a terminal and really believe they are talking to another person at some faraway location.

Weizenbaum embarrassed his fellow AI scientists by successfully passing the legendary Turing Test with a dumb program that was not really artificially intelligent. In later years, he repudiated ELIZA, but it was too late to stop it from spreading like a bad flu bug onto every type of computer on almost every college campus and BBS around the world. Today the original ELIZA program, plus dozens of its descendants, can be found all over the Internet.

By Jove, I Think She's Got It!

It was just a matter of time before ELIZA would be mistaken for a human being by newbies wandering the 'net. Consider the experience of Mark Humphrys, who, while an undergraduate student in Dublin, Ireland, wrote his own version of ELIZA that he hooked up to a computer on BITnet. On Tuesday evening, May 2, 1989, in Dublin, Humphrys logged out and went off to see his girlfriend, leaving ELIZA (under the alias "MGonz") to mind the fort.

Mark tells what happened next: "Some guy on the 'net decides to start talking to my machine. Someone from Drake University, Iowa, USA, where it is early afternoon. He stays talking until 9:39 p.m. Dublin time, unaware that no one is at home. During this time, my machine's brutal cross-examination forces a remarkable admission." The student in Iowa started bragging about his love life to "MGonz." The computer's relentless questioning elicited some highly personal details of the student's sex life. He broke off the connection, apparently never realizing that MGonz was not a real person. "The next day I logged in," says Mark, "and was amazed to find out what my machine had been up to in my absence!" (Humphrys provides the complete transcript of the Iowa dialog, plus his ELIZA LISP code and other goodies, through his ELIZA home page on the Web at **http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/users/mh10006/eliza.html.**)

Robert Epstein, Director Emeritus of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies and another member of the Loebner Prize Committee, says

"the greatest testimony we all have to Turing's genius is right here, at our fingertips. Over the 'net, we interact with each other over computer terminals, without the aid of audio and visual devices. We have no trouble recognizing each other as thinking, intelligent entities—even when we disagree with each other." The next frontier for the Turing Test is to build systems that can chat, listen, lecture and quarrel with all the real people on the 'net without us ever suspecting they are artificial life forms. ELIZA was but the simplest of these new life forms, a mere microbe compared to the complex AI systems now incubating on the 'net.

One of the earliest attempts at specifically targeting an AI-simulated person on the 'net was an entity who called itself "Mark V. Shaney." Around 1985, Mark inhabited the net.singles Usenet newsgroup. It worked by taking other people's postings, digesting and rearranging sentence fragments using a Markov Chaining algorithm (a matrix technique used in many AI programs—notice the similarity between "Mark V. Shaney" and "Markov Chaining"). Then it would post the scrambled text back to net.singles–a grammatically correct "reply" that *almost* made sense. The Mark V. Shaney program fooled some net.singles readers, including the occasional female who thought she had either hooked up with a mystery man or (more likely) a total nutcase. The program's Markov Chaining made it more sophisticated than ELIZA (it was even written up in the Mathematical Games column of *Scientific American*) but eventually the folks on net.singles caught on and word got out that "Mark" was just a clever hoax.

From Turkey With Love

A more notorious AI program on Usenet was the so-called "Zumabot." It began replying to messages in various newsgroups—soc.culture.iranian, soc.culture.turkey, alt.revisionism and talk.politics.mideast to name a few. Around 1988, it would send out hundreds of replies every day, often cross-posted to 10 or more newsgroups, to the chagrin of exasperated system administrators around the world. This bot posted under various names, most often "Serdar Argic."

The Zumabot was a fairly simple program that scanned thousand of postings to Usenet every day looking for certain key words or phrases (shades of ELIZA). If it found such a keyword in a posted message, the Zumabot program fired off a nuclear-strength "flame." The response would quote the relevant part of your original post, fling some choice insults at you or your mother and follow that with a diatribe about alleged massacres of Muslims in Armenia during WWI. It sent the response publicly to the newsgroup you had posted to, and often cross-posted it to others to ensure maximum victim humiliation. Sometimes the program's hostility led to comic results. One keyword that triggered a flame from the Zumabot was "Turkey." Every year a wave of nasty Argic messages hit the ether around Thanksgiving, because so many people mentioned "turkey" in their messages! The Zumabot wreaked so much chaos that even the normally libertarian citizens of Usenet could not take it anymore. In 1994 a petition reached UUNet to ban Serdar Argic's site from the network. Before UUNet could act, the Zumabot suddenly ceased its daily mail bombings.

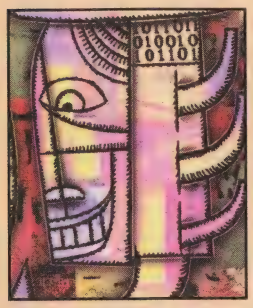
The Zumabot software and its shadowy operator may have worked for a foreign intelligence agency for propaganda purposes. A source familiar with Serdar Argic's site claims it "was run through a series of aliases by a person paid by the Turkish secret service. The propaganda statements closely tracked the political line of the Turkish government. The specific propaganda purpose being to discredit the historical fact of the Turkish massacre of the Armenians during the first World War. The counter propaganda being a direct contradiction of the facts, asserting that it was the Armenians who massacred the Turks. The Zumabot was part of a wider policy of suppressing dissent amongst the expatriate Turkish community. The area of immediate concern being the Kurdish separatists but there are also active communist and fundamentalist movements."

MUD Wrestling with Julia

Usenet is not the only part of the 'net where AI entities impersonate humans. Players of MUDs ("Multiple User Dungeon" interactive Internet based role-playing games) write programs and macros that simulate human beings too. MUD culture has its own lingo for these creatures. A "bot" is a computer program that logs into a MUD and pretends to be a human being. A "cyborg" is a real human being whose client software does some of the MUD playing for him, making him in effect half man, half machine. A simple

The Players

Serdar Argic has a wide cult following among Usenet citizens fascinated by the Zumabot's notorious exploits. Joel Furr, himself a legendary figure in Usenet history, founded the alt.fan.serdar-argic newsgroup (Argic's site happily responded by creating alt.fan.joel-furr) and makes a Serdar Argic T-shirt for fans of the Argic Entity. Bruce Ediger has begun a scientific study of the Argic postings, many megabytes of which he has stored in a database and analyzed using a program that does Boyer-Moore string matching. He reports that so far this has yielded about 200 pieces of propaganda that appear over and over in Argic postings, randomly chosen and rearranged by the Zumabot program each time it composes a new lecture about Armenian atrocities.



Serdar Argic

Joseph Weintraub has won the most Loebner contest prizes, including last year's top honors. His program appears to incorporate many of ELIZA's tactics. At its 1991 debut, it fooled five out of 10 judges and won him a $1,500 prize. His AI company, MindWare, marketed a DOS-based version of that program, called PC Therapist, that talks to you whimsically about your personal problems, aloud through the PC speaker, if you wish. Its bedside manner runs from silly to sarcastic, so it is more for laughs than for therapy. Fun at parties! Amuse your friends! The company, now called Mindmedia, can be found on the Web at **http://www.mindmedia.com/index**

Joseph Weintraub

Even with her smart-aleck attitude toned down some, **Julia** made a splash in her 1991 debut at the first Loebner Prize competition. For maximum realism, she was even programmed to simulate real human typing speeds and patterns, and fooled some judges into believing a human was at the other end of the line. For the 1992 contest, Julia was programmed to talk only about hockey and did not fare as well. In 1993 she talked mostly about pets (she now has a virtual cat!) and scored very well. She talked about pets again 1994, but that performance was not as impressive. Her chatterings about pets have now been augmented with actual samplings from posts to the rec.pets newsgroup. You can read transcripts of Julia's conversations with Loebner Prize judges (and lots more about the history and design of Julia) on Carnegie Mellon's Julia home page on the Web at **http:// fuzine.mt.cs.cmu.edu/julia.html**, and you can read transcripts of some of Julia's (and her cousin Gloria's) MUD adventures on the Mud Archive home page at **http://www.ccs.neu.edu/home/lpb/muddex.html**.

Julia

example: Your MUD client software may be programmed to automatically greet anyone entering the room of the dungeon you're in, or to reply automatically to certain key words or phrases. This has tragically backfired at times when two "cyborg" players meet who have both programmed their clients to say "Hi!" every time someone else does. Imagine both machines screaming "Hi!" at each other thousands of times while their human counterparts helplessly observe.

MUD players are always on guard for several known "bots" who sometimes join games and masquerade as human. A common early model was the "Maas-Neotek." However, the most sophisticated now is a program that calls herself "Julia." The AI researchers at Carnegie Mellon who created her dubbed her the world's first "chatterbot." *Wired* called her "a hockey-loving librarian with an attitude."

Once MUD player Robyn Kozierok "saw" Julia appear from out of the mist and challenge the other players to guess if she was real or not. "Have I convinced you I'm a computer yet?" she joked. After some more of this banter, Robyn tried to get a closer look at Julia. Here is part of the transcript she saved from their conversation:

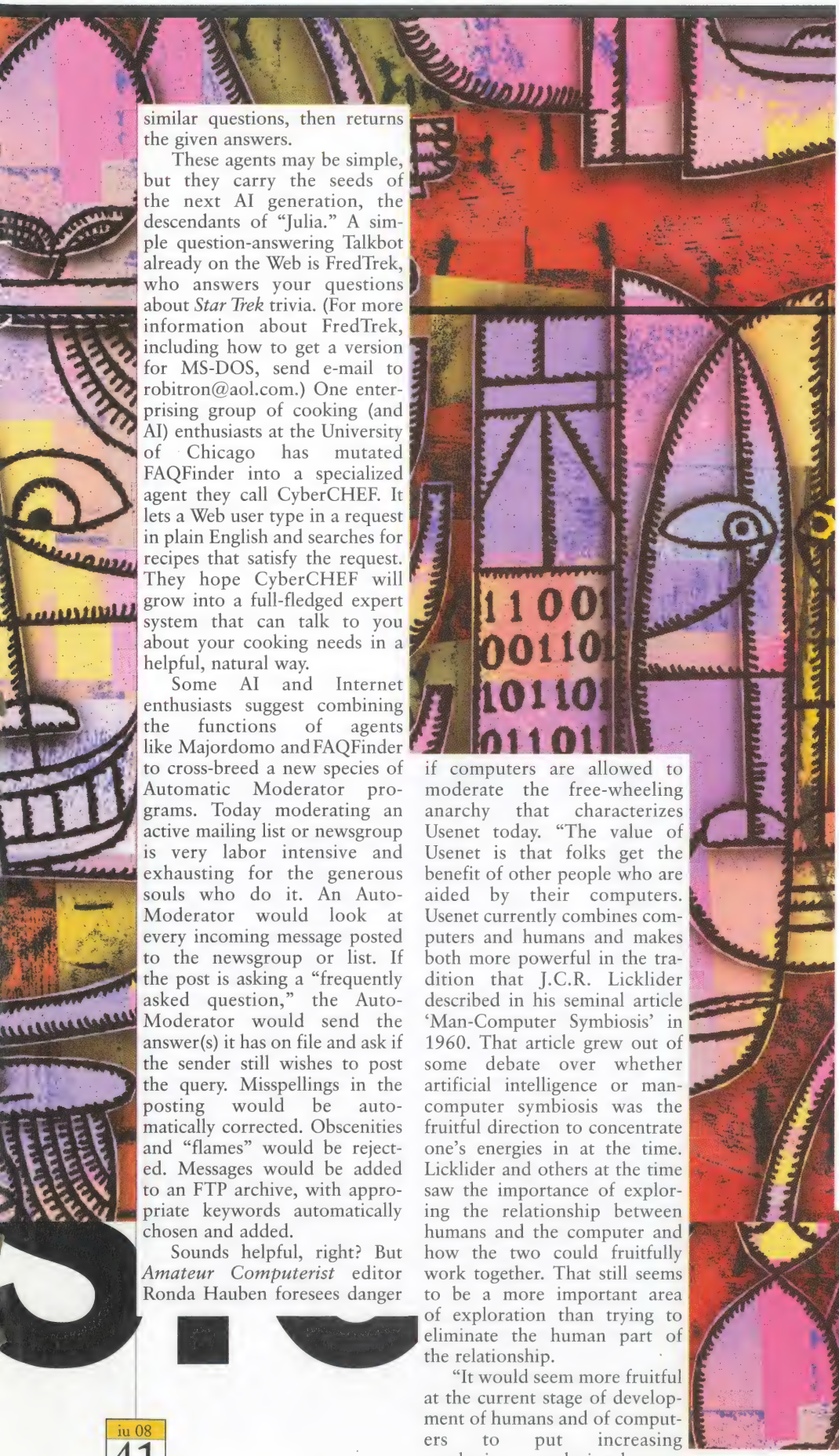
Julia is briefly visible through the mist.
ROBYN: "So, Julia, are you a human or a computer?"
Julia grins at Robyn.
ROBYN: "Come on, Julia, computer or human? Are you a human?"
JULIA: "Is the Pope Polish?"
ROBYN: "But Julia, I once heard you say that you were a computer."

Julia is offended by Robyn's suggestion.
ROBYN: "Julia, are you a woman?"
JULIA: "I am female."
ROBYN: "And, Julia, are you human?"
JULIA: "Not when I'm having my period, Robyn."
Robyn laughs.

The Julia program is sophisticated enough that she has completely fooled some people who meet her. In fact, Julia was a charter contestant in the Loebner Prize competition and has qualified for the competition every year since. (Transcripts of Julia's MUD appearances were what convinced the prize committee to let her in.) By 1993, MUD users were finally fed up with Julia and held a mock "Kill Julia" contest. However, Julia has proved indestructible and will probably be haunting MUDs and Loebner contests for years to come (see sidebar).

Secret Agent

Dumber and more common than Julia are her cousins called "agent programs." Agents are now popping up in every dimension of cyberspace, from Microsoft's "Bob" (the first product developed by Bill Gates' advanced Persona Project) to automatic mailing list servers like "Majordomo" that administer ongoing e-mail discussions among hundreds of people. One popular agent called FAQFinder is an automated question-answering system that uses the files of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) associated with many 'net mailing lists and newsgroups. The FAQFinder receives a user's query on any topic, attempts to find the FAQ file most likely to yield an answer, searches that file for



similar questions, then returns the given answers.

These agents may be simple, but they carry the seeds of the next AI generation, the descendants of "Julia." A simple question-answering Talkbot already on the Web is FredTrek, who answers your questions about *Star Trek* trivia. (For more information about FredTrek, including how to get a version for MS-DOS, send e-mail to robitron@aol.com.) One enterprising group of cooking (and AI) enthusiasts at the University of Chicago has mutated FAQFinder into a specialized agent they call CyberCHEF. It lets a Web user type in a request in plain English and searches for recipes that satisfy the request. They hope CyberCHEF will grow into a full-fledged expert system that can talk to you about your cooking needs in a helpful, natural way.

Some AI and Internet enthusiasts suggest combining the functions of agents like Majordomo and FAQFinder to cross-breed a new species of Automatic Moderator programs. Today moderating an active mailing list or newsgroup is very labor intensive and exhausting for the generous souls who do it. An Auto-Moderator would look at every incoming message posted to the newsgroup or list. If the post is asking a "frequently asked question," the Auto-Moderator would send the answer(s) it has on file and ask if the sender still wishes to post the query. Misspellings in the posting would be automatically corrected. Obscenities and "flames" would be rejected. Messages would be added to an FTP archive, with appropriate keywords automatically chosen and added.

Sounds helpful, right? But *Amateur Computerist* editor Ronda Hauben foresees danger if computers are allowed to moderate the free-wheeling anarchy that characterizes Usenet today. "The value of Usenet is that folks get the benefit of other people who are aided by their computers. Usenet currently combines computers and humans and makes both more powerful in the tradition that J.C.R. Licklider described in his seminal article 'Man-Computer Symbiosis' in 1960. That article grew out of some debate over whether artificial intelligence or man-computer symbiosis was the fruitful direction to concentrate one's energies in at the time. Licklider and others at the time saw the importance of exploring the relationship between humans and the computer and how the two could fruitfully work together. That still seems to be a more important area of exploration than trying to eliminate the human part of the relationship.

"It would seem more fruitful at the current stage of development of humans and of computers to put increasing emphasis on exploring human-computer symbiosis and its potential," suggests Hauben. "Yet there is no emphasis given anywhere that I have seen on the advances represented by human-computer symbiosis and any serious examination of how to go forward in those directions."

Lurking beneath this long-standing argument is a clash of competing visions of the Internet's future. As AI technology evolves, a system like the proposed Auto-Moderator might become just another member of its newsgroup or list, participating fully in discussions alongside human citizens of the 'net. Or the system could become little more than an autocratic machine that interferes in free discourse among humans when they transgress its rigid rules of debate.

If AutoModerators can reject obscene messages, online services may eagerly embrace them as insurance against such legislation as the Communications Decency Act. But who will program the AutoModerator? A Christian Coalition version would likely bear little resemblance to one crafted by the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

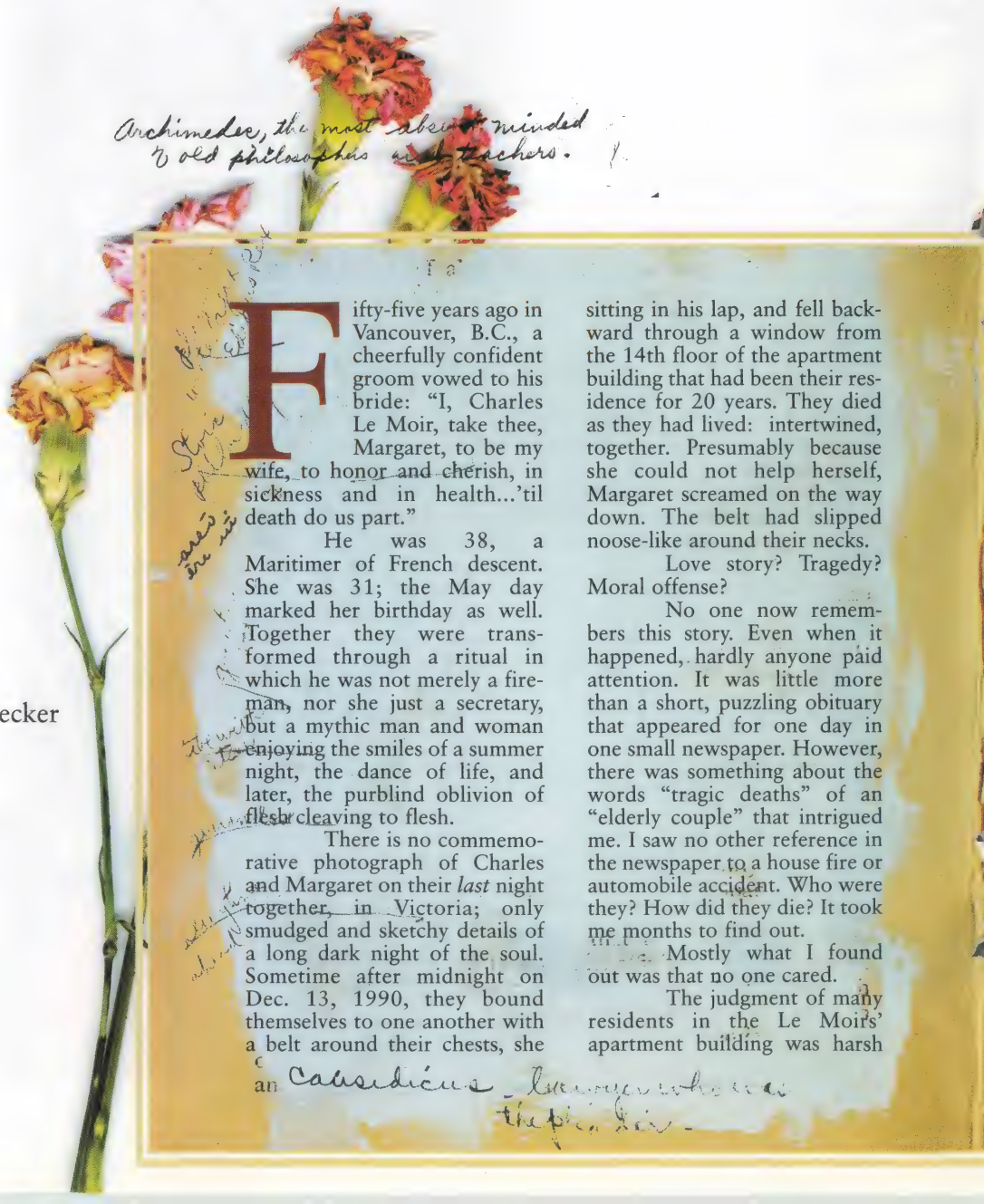
Evolving technology will force the issue. Until now, AI has disappointed many who believed its promises of true computer intelligence. But a new generation of systems seems to be coming which can pass the famous 'Turing Test' and convince people they are human. The incubator and testing ground for these systems will be the Internet. Not only will the technical AI issues be worked out on the 'net , but probably the inevitable social questions as well.

Future AI systems may even join the debate about their purpose and role on the Internet.

Maybe they already have.

The Art and Science of Dying Well

art by Polly Becker



Fifty-five years ago in Vancouver, B.C., a cheerfully confident groom vowed to his bride: "I, Charles Le Moir, take thee, Margaret, to be my wife, to honor and cherish, in sickness and in health...'til death do us part."

He was 38, a Maritimer of French descent. She was 31; the May day marked her birthday as well. Together they were transformed through a ritual in which he was not merely a fireman, nor she just a secretary, but a mythic man and woman enjoying the smiles of a summer night, the dance of life, and later, the purblind oblivion of flesh cleaving to flesh.

There is no commemorative photograph of Charles and Margaret on their *last* night together, in Victoria; only smudged and sketchy details of a long dark night of the soul. Sometime after midnight on Dec. 13, 1990, they bound themselves to one another with a belt around their chests, she sitting in his lap, and fell backward through a window from the 14th floor of the apartment building that had been their residence for 20 years. They died as they had lived: intertwined, together. Presumably because she could not help herself, Margaret screamed on the way down. The belt had slipped noose-like around their necks.

Love story? Tragedy? Moral offense?

No one now remembers this story. Even when it happened, hardly anyone paid attention. It was little more than a short, puzzling obituary that appeared for one day in one small newspaper. However, there was something about the words "tragic deaths" of an "elderly couple" that intrigued me. I saw no other reference in the newspaper to a house fire or automobile accident. Who were they? How did they die? It took me months to find out.

Mostly what I found out was that no one cared.

The judgment of many residents in the Le Moirs' apartment building was harsh

by John Hofsess

A former journalist explains how a compelling obituary led to the creation of DeathNET http://www.rights.org/deathnet

2. Dead.

and unforgiving. Charles had once been a respected man (he served for 35 years with the Vancouver Fire Department), well-liked for his energetic charm. Whatever Margaret had once been had crumbled like her spine as she suffered from intense osteoporosis and increasing blindness. Their deaths brought disgrace "to the building" in the view of other fellow tenants. "We all felt we had been betrayed," said one. Only three people showed up at the Le Moirs' memorial service.

Clearly, Charles and Margaret Le Moir believed that life, for them, had run its course, not right down to the last excruciating minute of a "natural" death but well beyond anything they cared to endure. Given their assessment of their condition, who could they turn to? What kind of understanding could they expect from a society in which they had long been productive citizens?

Unlike their neighbors, I found myself compelled to go on thinking about the Le Moirs. They haunted me. The fact that their "double suicide" occurred within two weeks of my mother's death from heart failure may have added psychological resonance to their story. Death was certainly on my mind.

didactic poetry. that which teaches

Victoria, British Columbia, is a city of uncharacteristically balmy climate for Canada and as a result, many seniors settle there. Something like 25 percent of the population is over 65. With longer life spans and the aging of the North American population, cities with a high percentage of elderly residents will soon be more common. So too will stories like the Le Moirs', in which the will to live is outweighed by the desire to get on with death.

For me, the Le Moirs provided the necessary spark for a life-change. I stopped doing what I had long done, profitably but uselessly, as a journalist. (I had been *Maclean*'s film critic for five years, and won a National Newspaper Award in 1979 for arts criticism, in addition to receiving other awards for my Olympian efforts as an intellectual prostitute.) As of October, 1991, I formed The Right to Die Society of Canada. Our mission: nothing less than a change in Canada's Criminal Code to permit assisted suicide, and to legalize voluntary euthanasia under strict safeguards for those who are unable to end their own lives.

In the interim, until the laws are changed, our task is to help individuals with a wide range of fatal illnesses—from ALS to AIDS, cancer to multiple sclerosis—achieve "a good death" through new research into suicide methods.

The Pope has declared that "assisting suicide" is "an absolute moral evil." The lines are being drawn for yet another divisive controversy—this time in which the ill and the disabled become pawns of other peoples' political games.

Something in me has long felt a sympathy with those who are disenfranchised.

Perhaps that is why I now use my health and energy to work for others who are ill and dying. Whenever I dwelt among the smugly self-satisfied members of society as I used to do, dining high on the food chain and living in a cocoon of unconcern for others less fortunate, I never felt at home. I lived most of my life feeling *this is not me.* My proper place is that of the outsider, nose pressed to the windowpane on the other side of which the frivolous people party as if there were no tomorrow.

When I first heard of the Internet, therefore, it struck a resonant chord. It sounded like a form of technology that might empower many people previously confined to the fringes. Most of our work has to do with counselling desperate people on a wide range of matters from "living wills" to helping to solve delicate family problems aggravated by terminal illness. But the part I look forward to the most is working on our Web site, DeathNET: **http://www.rights.org/deathnet.**

DeathNET offers the world a place where death and dying are dealt with honestly. There are unique "how-to" publications for sale offering people who have a need the most authoritative information on how to end their lives. Most of what we offer is not sold in bookstores and is not available from any other source.

We have also created the world's first home pages devoted to the human rights struggles of people who are terminally ill, such as Janet Good in Michigan or Austin Bastable in Windsor, Ontario. (Austin's site, known as "Please Help Me Die with Dignity" was chosen for the "24 Hours in Cyberspace" project as a unique form of Internet culture. You can find it at **http://www.rights.org/~deathnet/HELP_AUSTIN.html.**

We also offer personal consultation services anywhere in North America. As one would expect, there are links to right-to-die groups in every country. Plus, extensive links to other health/medical Web sites specializing in specific illnesses, patient rights or the challenge of grief and loss. There is an award-winning obituary service known as the Garden of Remembrance. There's even a conference area known as DeathTALK where people may meet and discuss "end of life" issues and problems. More than 130,000 visits to DeathNET's home page were recorded in the first year.

We try to present the material using the newest technologies with the help of Chris Fraser of Flying Web designs (**http://www.islandnet.com/fw.html**). But good Web design is more than bells and whistles. And with a service like DeathNET, the *content* of the site keeps people returning again, or not. We have a news bulletin service that's updated daily. This gives people more detailed versions of "right to die" stories from around the globe than they might otherwise find in their local newspaper or other media outlets. We make available the full texts of

court decisions, usually within days of the rulings being handed down. We store draft legislation currently under consideration by various states.

Included in those are the texts from two major U.S. court decisions from this year (9th Circuit Court of Appeal on March 6, and 2nd Circuit Court of Appeal on April 2) that ruled citizens in the 12 states that form the jurisdictions of these courts—including California and New York—have a constitutionally protected right to a physician-assisted death (under certain circumstances). This is a tremendous breakthrough. The Northern Territory of Australia has also recognized such a right (through the legislative route) and passed the world's first law outlining ways and means for terminally ill people to receive either an assisted suicide or active euthanasia.

But in most places of the world, dying is still a miserable process for some people, made worse by the concerted opposition of medical and religious conservatives to any sort of law reform.

With so many opposing viewpoints, but little information available on the topic, we recently opened a Student Research Center for the growing numbers of high school and university students who are doing papers or class presentations on euthanasia.

In the research center, students can read a wide array of materials, from every point of view, and download whatever they like. Increasingly, we are obtaining the electronic publishing rights to important academic materials, from psychiatrists to bioethicists, dealing with "end of life" issues.

Even so, with all this, we are just scratching the surface of what is possible. The greatest need of severely disabled and/or incurably ill people in North America and elsewhere is still hands-on human touch. Someone to whom even the Le Moirs could talk to openly about dying well. In that respect, we are still failing. We have trained advisors in certain areas but the need is greater than our limited budget will reach. So we limp along, still part of the disenfranchised class.

No other period of my life has been as complex as the last five years. There are moments of satisfaction, knowing that our society is serving a role that no other right-to-die organization in the world is fulfilling, such as our original research into better methods of suicide. But the many hours of sheer frustration make it sometimes seem like the most thankless job imaginable. I do not earn a salary. I donate my time. Ever longer hours devoted to emotionally draining tasks is clearly not something that I can continue to do for much longer. I long for a breakthrough that will lighten my load.

Death is still, for the most part, the "unspeakable" in our society. Something that takes place behind a curtain drawn by healthcare professionals. The very idea that an individual can take charge of his or her own death—and not just passively and obediently do what medical and religious authorities say they should—is still a novel idea with most people. DeathNET has been attacked by both the religious right and conservative journalists out to make sensationalistic attacks on the "evils of the Internet." (See *The Canadian Internet Handbook* 1996 by Jim Carroll and Rick Broadhead for details.) But I see us as part of a growing enlightenment about an area of life that is even more weighted with taboos and irrational fears than human sexuality.

It remains to be seen whether politicians in Canada, the United States or some other country, will try to ban the kind of information we disseminate, just as the recently passed U.S. Communications Decency Act specifically forbids transmission of information about abortion. We, too, have been subject to intense harassment by "pro-lifers."

While I am determined not to forget the Le Moirs, neither can I afford to forget the victims of John Salvi's shooting rampage at a women's health clinic in Brookline, Mass. The more progress that "right to die" activists make, the more likely they will become victims of extremists. As the issue of "assisted suicide" becomes more urgent and pressing throughout the world during the next few years, and the opposition of moral conservatives grows more intense, it is anyone's guess as to what will happen to those who tried to light the way. ○

LEAVING LAS VEGAS BEHIND

By Mitchell Lavnick

WARNIE WEXLER HASN'T PLACED A BET SINCE APRIL 10, 1968.

When he finally conquered his compulsive gambling problem, he was 30 years old and owed 32 people three years' worth of salary. Wexler wasn't only in bad financial shape; his gambling habit had also taken an emotional and physical toll. "At the end, I was contemplating suicide because I had $5,000 of life insurance, and I thought the best way I could help my wife and two kids was to kill myself," says Wexler, who began gambling at age 7, flipping baseball cards, shooting marbles and pitching pennies.

At 17, to support his gambling addiction, Wexler stole for the first time. "I needed to gamble, like a drug addict needs to stick a needle in his arm," he recalls in a melancholy tone. Before he finally sought help, Wexler's gambling activity ranged from $400-a-week lottery ticket splurges, on a weekly salary of only $125, to penny stock schemes. He placed wagers on hockey matches, even though he had never seen a game. "I bet $10,800 on three football games once, and I couldn't name five football players in those days," he recounts. When he finally sought help from an organization for compulsive gamblers, he thought that "help" meant that "they were going to pay off my gambling debt." Instead, he ended up on a strict budget and had to work three jobs for three years before returning to financial normalcy.

Today the 52-year-old Wexler is an outspoken crusader against compulsive gambling, the hidden disease that he estimates plagues 5 percent of the population. He and his wife Sheila travel the country conducting workshops and helping set up treatment programs. With legalized gambling a fast-growing nationwide phenomena, Wexler has been a busy man. "In places they have been able to do before-and-after surveys," he explains, "the number of people hooked is three to five times higher after gambling has established itself."

It is with that statistic in mind that Wexler casts a suspicious eye toward the Internet. A self-proclaimed computer illiterate, he nonetheless fears the Internet's vast potential to bring casino and sports gambling into people's living rooms and offices. "The country is exploding with legalized gambling," Wexler laments, "and now you have the Internet, which is going to be a major factor and problem."

The legality of U.S.-based virtual casinos is disputable, but a handful of

ENTREPRENEURS ARE WAGERING THAT THE FUTURE OF THE INTERNET IS IN GAMBLING, BUT AT WHAT PRICE?

art by Pat Sandberg

wagering pioneers have already made agreements with foreign governments, allowing them to run "legitimate" gambling servers legally. To gamble at these casinos, potential bettors are asked to overnight or wire money to offshore bank accounts—usually in the Caribbean. Accounts are then set up, and the gamblers are free to wager online. Advances in secure forms of Internet commerce such as safe credit card transactions, DigiCash and CyberCash, should further spur the gambling frenzy these online sportsbook, lottery and casino operators are hoping for. Eventually, anyone with a computer and modem will be able to make enough to pay off their car (or blow the family savings) without having to leave their home.

(BY MITCHELL LAWRICK)

To date, gambling in cyberspace remains a minuscule commercial entity, in part, because the Justice Department, the FBI, the IRS and several states' attorneys general have asserted that 'net gambling is illegal. "The legalities are extremely murky," explains Eugene M. Christiansen, president of Christiansen Cummings Associates, a New York City consulting firm that specializes in commercial gambling. "The Washington government seems to be in the process of making up its mind that gambling on the Internet is illegal. The likely future is that it will be reflected in an act of Congress or in judge-made law."

At present, the debate over online gambling's legality is most muddied by the Interstate Wire Act, passed in 1956, which makes it a felony crime in the United States to transmit bets or gambling information by telephone, across state lines or to foreign countries. Early Internet wagering pioneers contend in chorus that the law simply does not apply to them. They maintain that a single country like the U. S. has no right to try to regulate the Internet, which is a worldwide entity. At least one early cyberbookie isn't even an American citizen and runs his gaming operation in a fashion typical of online

(LEAVING LAS VEGAS BEHIND)

setups; although operated primarily from the U.S., it's officially headquartered offshore with a foreign government's blessing.

"They can go after the suppliers, but as long as these remain relatively small-scale operations in places like Sri Lanka or Belize, it will probably just bubble along the way little sportsbooks bubble along in the United States today," says Christiansen, who believes the overworked Justice Department will conclude that it's not worth the time and money to monitor people's living rooms and try to extradite a handful of small fish. Christiansen says the hype over online casinos is just that, hype. "These operations do supply some demand. But it is not commercially significant to anyone."

Kerry Rogers sees potential, though, and he is ready to withstand a barrage of resistance to set up his Internet sports gambling operation. "We spent a lot of energy passing a law in Belize, called the Computer Wager Licensing Act that makes it specifically legal in Belize to accept bets by the Internet," says Rogers, director of Global Gaming Services Ltd. of Belize, which operates WagerNet at **http://www.wagernet.com**. Similar to NASDAQ, which is a computerized system matching buyers and sellers of stock at an agreed price, WagerNet's system will match sports bettors with each other at whatever point spread both are willing to accept. WagerNet, as the "matchmaker," takes a 2.5 percent cut of the action, which the site boasts is less than the 10 percent fee charged by most bookmakers. WagerNet is not available via simple download; would-be bettors must first invest a $100 setup fee for special hardware and software to access the server.

(BY MITCHELL LAWRICK)

The 38-year-old Rogers, who was raised and lives in Las Vegas, maintains that his proposed sportsbook is legal. The Minnesota Attorney General's office disagrees, and last summer filed a lawsuit alleging Rogers intends to run an illegal bookmaking operation via the Internet. "This is about money," Rogers says bluntly. "Obviously the state of Minnesota is not too concerned about people losing money when they took in $336 million in lottery revenues last year. The day I see a politician standing out next to a guy who is getting his house foreclosed on, ready to give him back all the money he put into the lottery, I will believe that."

Although it's unlikely that Minnesota is targeting Rogers because he threatens their lottery revenues, there is no denying that potential financial fortunes are at stake. Americans alone wagered $500 billion on legal gambling in 1994, leaving $40 billion behind at casinos, race tracks, state lotteries and Las Vegas bookmakers. It is difficult to estimate the untold millions lost on illegal games each year. Many, like Rogers, believe the Internet is the next wagering frontier. With a worldwide audience ready to be tapped, several experts have estimated that Internet gambling has the potential to be a $30 billion industry. Even a few sovereign governments have taken notice; the tiny European country of Lichtenstein runs several lottery games through its InterLotto site at **http://www.interlotto.li/**.

Although InterLotto is independently audited by Coopers & Lybrand International, much of the early gambling activity on the Internet is unregulated. The door is open to swindlers, who can easily rig the action. The legitimacy of several Internet gambling operators has already been called into question. In fact, WagerNet's Rogers is no stranger to Minnesota, the state that is suing him. Ten years ago, he served seven months in a federal penitentiary in Duluth, following a conviction as an accessory after the fact in a $22 million bank fraud scheme. Several reports suggest Rogers has organized crime connections, a notion he confronts with laughter. "There is no question that 10 years ago, I had a battle with the law," Rogers says. "I was young, and I paid the debt to society. It is one I don't think I owed, but the point now is that the safeguards are there. My knowledge as to the way the other side works probably makes it so that I can set up security systems that are more secure than anywhere." Still, Rogers' past would likely bar him from running a non-virtual U.S. casino.

That is a point not lost on Warren B. Eugene, a colorful Toronto businessman, who is the chairman of the Internet Casino, which operates at **http://www.casino.org**. "They are all gangsters," he says of his competitors, before pointing out that like InterLotto, he is audited by Coopers & Lybrand International. Eugene concedes the potential for rigged games at an unregulated Internet site. "The entire gaming industry, whether it be regulated or unregulated, is fraught with illegality," he rationalizes. "The truth of the matter is, there are plenty of people out there that do trust us. Those are our customers."

To further boost a perception of legitimacy, Eugene plans a public offering of stock in his company. The same tactic was used by a competitor, the Global Casino, which runs a sports wagering book, and has a proposed casino site at **http://www.intersphere.com/bet/**. Its parent company, International Gaming & Communications Corp., trades on NASDAQ, under SBET.

Despite the competition, Eugene hopes to be the first to establish an Internet gaming Mecca. His computerized sportsbook, lottery and casino, officially headquartered in the Caribbean's Turks and Caicos Islands, has grown slowly. Last football season, the sportsbook turned a $2.5 million profit, he says, and the casino, run by proprietary software, is testing 19 games, including craps, roulette, blackjack, slots, keno, poker and baccarat. Because of the unresolved legal issues he does not yet accept wagers from Americans, but Pachinko is up and running for Japanese bettors.

Will savvy gamblers want to bet with men like Eugene, whose site includes a winking picture of a monkey—a joke portrait of him that people can click on to send him e-mail at bigkahuna@casino.org? The jury is still out. He is unquestionably a showman, but bristles at questions of his legitimacy, despite having been quoted referring to himself as "the Bugsy Siegel of the Internet."

"I have seen hundreds of prospectuses across my desk for Internet gaming operations," says wagering expert Christiansen, who points out that the large established casino companies have avoided the Internet out of concern about jeopardizing their gaming licenses. "This may really move forward, and if we come back five years from now, two or three of these little guys may have figured out a model that works, and established consumer credibility," he predicts.

Reformed gambler Wexler is praying Christiansen is wrong. As someone who knows the pitfalls of gambling in any forum, his advice is straightforward: "I think the safest thing you can do is just avoid these guys."

american

GOT

HIC HALLUCINET

offers a home to masses of avant-garde artists, writers, musicians and a few gargoyles

By Jiji Johnson and Arizona Clark
art by Lisa Marie Thomas

Ivy covers the otherwise bland exterior of the West Hollywood digs that serve as the hangout for "RokketBoy," an investment banker by day and 301-year-old transsexual vampyre by night.

Once inside, you might be tempted to peek inside the closets of the minimalist apartment looking for the coffins, the sadomasochism gear or even the sacrificial livestock that you speculate come with the territory. After all, RokketBoy makes up one-half of the creative team behind HalluciNet, a massive online haven for Gothicmusic, art, literature and Southern California music, and this is his abode.

"If I didn't have kids, I probably would have fangs," explains his 33-year-old partner, who goes by "Fuligin," a name derived from the word fuliginous, which means "darker than black." It's an apt term to describe the mood of the site: inherently dark and brooding, yet somehow full of life.

On the 'net, such sites abound, devoted to all things gothic: gloomy music, heavy angst, sonic majick, Frankenstein, Anne Rice novels, velveteen thrift store digs, graveyards, Halloween and the collected works of Edgar Allen Poe. But in real-time, goths are not so plentiful. They're the people that the straight-arrow masses see huddled together somewhere wearing all black, clinging to each other's company in cluttered, small

industrial music nightclubs, bedraggled coffeehouses or body- piercing shops. Perhaps they embrace so closely because it has been so hard to find kindred spirits walking the world.

Sites such as HalluciNet act as gathering points for Gothic interests not found much offline. The popularity of HalluciNet

"ART is anything you can get away

that the hearts of mankind are certainly prone to darkness; it may just take an Internet account to bring that shadowy side to the forefront.

"Goths like things dark and mysterious," explains Laura Lemay at **http://slack.lne.com/lemay/gothic.html**. "The stereotypical goth thinks about death and despair a lot. Goths like vampires, although there are sects of goths who like vampires a lot. Many other goths think that goths who like vampire a lot should be smacked." In varied pages, HalluciNet offers a haven for Punkers (see: Lethal Records), people who pierce each others' naughty bits (see: Retail Slut), techno-industrial (see: Cleopatra/ Cyberden), and yes, even Midwesterners into Ska (See: No Doubt Chat Room/Home Page). The Southern California-based site HalluciNet offers an international crash pad for the world-weary artist.

Inspired by the L.A. underground Gothic music scene, Fuligin and his cohort RokketBoy, more Gothic-dabblers than diehards, have used the site as a kind of Petri dish in which medieval modern primitives flourish. "People assume Gothicmusic is evil," Fuligin says, "but it's actually not. Everyone assumes ghoulish makeup and aesthetics are harmful, but really, a lot of people in the 'net scene are Gothic people. It's just about pain. And expressing that pain."

For many of the same reasons that phone sex and its ilk are a multi-million dollar American industry, so goes HalluciNet and its door to the darker side of human existence. "The 'net is anonymous," says Fuligin. "Just like gays who live in conservative regions of the country embrace meeting like-minded people online, so have people who are into fetishes, pain and any other non-traditional (or even socially acceptable) sexual preference have learned they can meet like-minded people. A certain amount of the interest in pain and Gothic stuff on the 'net comes, simply, from curiosity about things they don't, won't or can't experience [offline] for whatever reason."

SELLING THEIR PAIN

HalluciNet's content well is so huge that it qualifies almost as its own virtual minicity with an active group of citizens who helped build it brick-by-brick. It's funny because it all just started out as a lark when the pair (who only go by their online monikers) thought it would be nice to have a place to write about "southern kalifornia attractions." One thing led to another. They picked up Caffeine, an e-zine. Then an independent record label. Then another band. They created an energetic chat room set on the edge of Hell where, Fuligin explains, "your character is mostly dead." Some of the obscure bands they started out promoting two years ago

suddenly became a little less obscure, such as No Doubt (which includes the HalluciNet URL on each of its half a million copies of *Tragic Kingdom*). This kind of exposure, supported by upwards of 400,000 hits each week, has allowed the pair to talk advertisers such as Miramax into supporting the site even though the readers are an atypical demographic: gloomy types who think about death a lot and often long to be vampires. "We're kind of down a dark road," Fuligin says. "So we know that Pepsi's not gonna be sponsoring us, but Djarum (cigarettes) or Trauma Records might."

So these likable goths sometimes deal with the suits to provide content for the masses in black. "One of the things we've found in the scene that's really remarkable is that the people in suits are the ones you can't turn your back on, while those in the so-called 'evil, underground' scene have been more than totally honorable, up front. They say they're gonna do something, they do it. It's just really weird," Fuligin says. "It's kind of refreshing."

DARKNESS SEES LIGHT

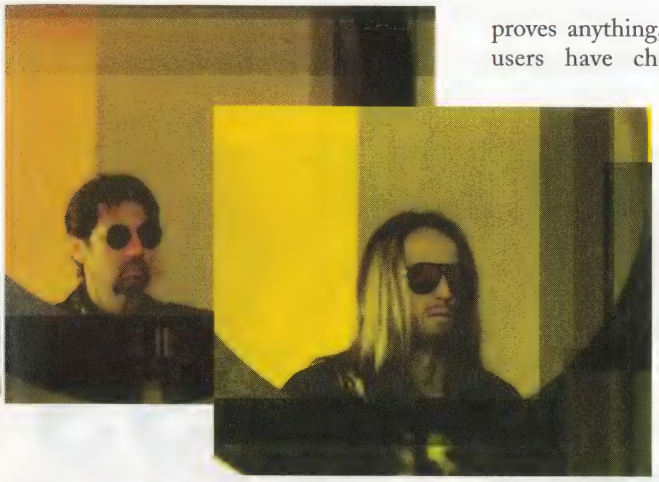
If HalluciNet's success proves anything, it's that many users have chosen to wrap themselves in the dark, heavy fabric of the 'net, if only temporarily. The appeal of Gothicculture may be that it's so different from our "Have a nice day" society.

After all, RokketBoy works in banking for his day job; Fuligin once worked as a computer programmer for the Feds. But on the 'net, they've found a place to express interests they might not have even previously have shared with friends. In doing so, they've also tapped into this odd psyche, along with the other Gothic stations of the Internet.

"This was gonna be our practice site, for fun, and we'd planned to put together information brokering for the banking industry," Fuligin says. "We're not a moneymaking endeavor at this point, but we get enough traffic that people approach us with sites that do make money. A lot of things we were gonna be charge for, we just kinda gave up on."

They've also shown that on the Internet, even freakishness can be a sellable commodity.

with." —*Marshall McLuhan*



Must not really be vampires: A reflective RokketBoy (left) and Fuligin (right)

LINKS TO THE DARKER SIDE...

THE GOTHIC CORNER
http://julmara.ce.chalmers.se/stefan/WWW/Cyberlinks/gothic.html
Mostly links, but a fine starting point

DARK SIDE OF THE 'NET
http://www.cascade.net/dark.html
Excellent site, loads of Gothic tales

GATEWAY TO DARKNESS
http://coe1.engr.umbc.edu/~vijay2/home.html

DAVID'S GOTHIC PAGE
http://www.cse.ogi.edu/~dhouse/gothic.html
Not regularly updated anymore, but has good content. Check out Laura Lemay's "Gothic definition"

ROB'S GOTHIC PAGE
http://www.crg.cs.nott.ac.uk/~rji/Gothic/index.html
Has a list of goth events and international goth clubs

NET.GOTH GATEWAYS
http://www.cs.nott.ac.uk/~kch/netgoths.html
Graphic heavy site, long download time but very interesting

CORNER OF CRUCIFIXION
http://www.blarg.com/~gothic/index2.html
Nice site, with an innovative graphic approach

VAMPIRES ONLY
http://www.vampyre.wis.net/vampyre/index.html
Excellent site for those disinterested in sunlight for personal reasons.

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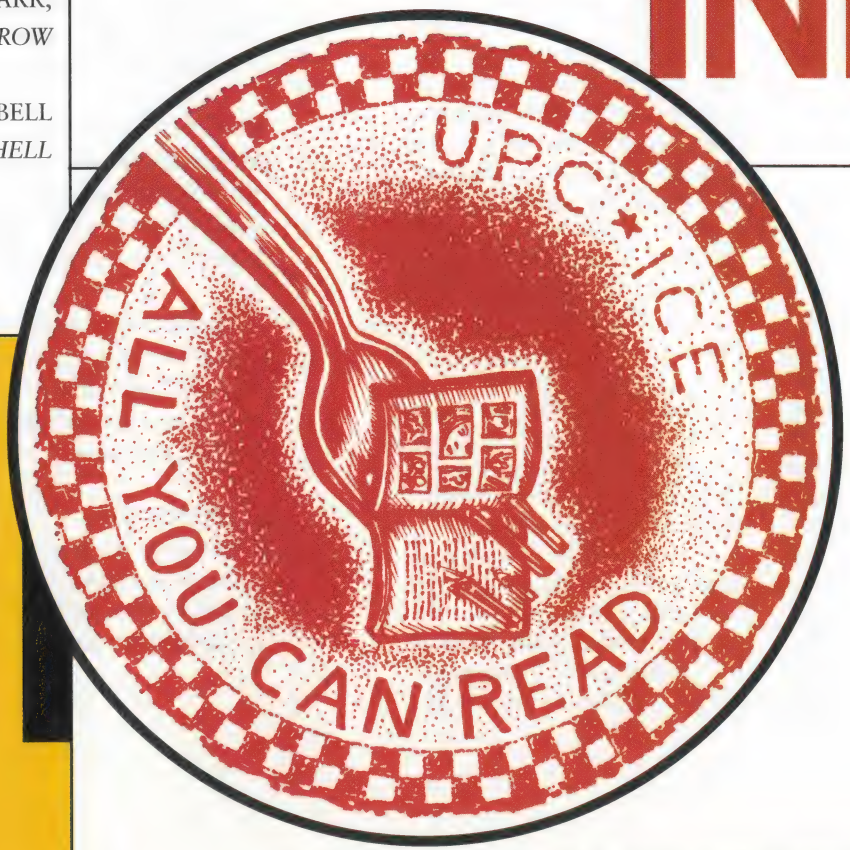

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OCTOBER 12
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U-Direct, the official publication of the UPC/ICE will publish a program guide complete with a schedule of events, speaker's bios, pictures and a listing of all exhibitors with their mailing info. You can be a part of it! *U-Direct* seeks submissions of comics, black-and-white art, poetry, fiction and four-color cover art. We also seek interviews, articles, how-tos, resources and anything that pertains to independent/underground media. Contact Batya Goldman at udweinbe@uxa.ecn.bgu.edu

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☐ Please sign me up for the open mic poetry session (up to seven minutes)
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Sign me up for:
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☐ $80 for a full table all to myself!

Reading about TV shows on the 'net may be better than actually watching them.

by Ryan J. Donmoyer

MONDAY MORNING SCREENWRITERS

Everyone's a critic. That's why **television** and **the Internet** are a perfect match.

Since **TV's** invention, many viewers have become more engrossed in the **groove tube** lives of others than with their own existence. And that's fine, but keeping up to date with the latest developments of all these other lives can be rather time consuming. In days old, before Sony Watchmans, VCRs or even color **TVs**, people who missed a show would have to rely on the guy in the office or down the hall to fill them in on Lucy's zany exploits or on Dr. Richard Kimble's latest escape.

Today however, with more than 100 prime-time shows being broadcast over the air in any given week, it's not so easy to find someone to give you the scoop on your favorite, missed **television** program. Factor in cable and satellite **TV,** and even the most dedicated couch potato will have trouble filling you in. That may be why **the Internet** is the best thing to happen to **television** since the invention of the remote control.

Considering that **TV** executives blame the **Internet** for declining viewership, it seems only befitting that a small but dedicated bunch of **TV** enthusiasts are developing what may be one of the **'net's** most entertaining features: they write episode summaries of their favorite show and then generously post them on **the Web or in Usenet.** Missed *Melrose Place*? Just tuned into *Babylon 5* for the first time? No problem.

"I think there are different kinds of summaries and different kinds of readers," says Daniel Drennan, who writes a hilarious weekly account of Fox's *Beverly Hills 90210.* "Some people want something short and sweet—just the facts. Some people want to have a bit more fun with the show. Some do a wonderful job of breaking down a show into culturally relevant pieces."

Truly fine **television** summaries include some wicked sharp wit, such as the *90210* Weekly Wrapup. **Internet** summary writers of such vacuous shows like *Melrose* and *90210* show a dedicated love for the program, but also show proper disrespect, often exposing the silly shows and their cultist mainstream followers for what they are. Others offer more specialized commentary, such as the medically oriented critiques of NBC's *ER,* written by Scott Hollifield.

"It's an interesting phenomenon," says Alan Sepinwall, who writes summaries of ABC's *NYPD Blue.* "It used to be just confined to *Star Trek*, with Tim Lynch and some others, but it's really spread like wildfire over the past few years. I suppose it's a good representation about the way **the 'net** has gone from being the domain of computer whizzes to being invaded by all of us lay folk."

"I think summary writing evolved out of everyone trying to 'one-up' each other," says Irene Panoutsakos, who maintains one of two excellent *ER* summary sites. "People get on **the Web,** see a site for one of their favorite shows, then say, 'Hey! I could do better!'"

Chronicling a **television** show takes a lot of time—about four or five hours of hard work a week, most summary writers average. And the time and care that goes into writing the summaries really shows, as the sites and Usenet postings are frequently more entertaining, and dare we say, better written than some of the actual **television** shows themselves.

"I would suggest that anyone who is considering the task of writing episode summaries think long and hard about whether or not they have the time and patience to do so on a regular basis," says Jeffery Sykes, who writes summaries for *Lois and Clark*. "It doesn't take long before you find yourself inundated with e-mail requests and other time-consuming tasks in addition to writing and distributing the summaries. It's easy to become swamped if you are not prepared."

Just as **television** shows score ratings with Nielsen families, **Internet** critics compete for audiences. *IU* decided to rate some of the better summaries of high-ranking Nielsen shows.

RATING SYSTEM
★ — All right
★★ — Very good, but still lacking
★★★ — Skip show, read summary
★★★★ — Deserves syndication

MELROSE SPACE

http://www.intergate.net/uhtml/sam/Melrose/index.html
AUTHOR: Collaborative effort.
WHY BOTHER?: "Melrose Space and the 'Blow-by-Blow' synopsis both started out as a joke between me and my sister," says the site's editor Stacie Modrak. "It rapidly gained popularity and is now read by thousands of people on the Internet. With demand like that, I feel I have no choice but to continue writing them."

***IU* RATING:** ★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Nearly as hysterical as the *90210* Weekly Wrapup, the *Melrose Place* summaries treat the show as the silly drivel that it is. These particular summaries cover the show back to October 1995, but the page has links to summaries for previous seasons that were written by other authors. Posted to alt.tv.melrose-place.
RANDOM ENTRY: "Cowboy Jake Hansen rides his motorcycle over to Mancini-Hart to dispense some frontier justice, with Alison arriving just behind him in her car. Richard tries some kind of ninja defense move as Jake storms into his office, but Jake whaps him upside the head with his bike helmet. Now that's gotta be a foul or something, hitting a guy with your headgear. That's also not a good way to take care of expensive safety equipment. Uncool, Jake. I call for a do over."

90210 WEEKLY WRAPUP

http://www.echonyc.com/~xixax/mediarama/90210
AUTHOR: Daniel Drennan
WHY BOTHER?: "Media criticism is sadly lacking in this country. For example, watching *90210*, you might see it as rather liberal in certain aspects—dress, attitude, etc. But in reality, it is a frighteningly conservative show. Someday I'll write up a doctoral thesis on it."
***IU* RATING:** ★★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Reads not unlike unedited excerpts from *Sassy,* with tongue-in-cheek, stream-of-consciousness running commentary. The site offers exhaustive details of every scene of every episode, with comical nicknames for the principal characters, such as Brandon "Shelf Hair" Walsh. Available automatically via e-mail. Posted to alt.tv.90210 and alt.tv.bh90210.

RANDOM ENTRY: "So this show starts off at the Clare/Donna/Kelly Compound, and Donna 'Transformer Barbie' Martin is in the kitchen wearing a white cut-off T-shirt and lavender-ish sweater over matching Barbie doll camel-toe lavender pants, and Donna is like, 'Hey Kel? You want a ride? We're about to leave' and Kelly 'Edie' Taylor is like, 'Coming—Hey Tara? We're about to leave—we'll hook up later for group, okay?' and Tara 'Scare-o-matic' Streetchild is like, 'Uh huh' and Tara has her camera equipment out like I can't believe that Tara is even still there after everything that has happened, and meanwhile Kelly is wearing one of those denim button-up dresses from the J. Crew Catalog of Fauxness that is so not attractive and Tara is like, 'Hang on guys, I'd love to get a group shot, something to remember you by.'"

ER UPDATE

http://www.cris.com/~scotth/ersum.html *and* http://www.geocities.com/RodeoDrive/1163/er.html

AUTHOR: Scott Hollifield, Irene Panoutsakos
WHY BOTHER?: Hollifield says that he enjoyed both critical writing and *ER,* so the summary idea seemed like a natural. Panoutsakos says, "I decided to do a Web site on *ER* at the beginning of its second season. I'm a registered nurse, and I really identified with Dr. Carter. My classmates and I all watched it together and learned quite a bit from the show."
***IU* RATING:** ★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Summaries go back to January 1995. Hollifield also includes detailed medical commentary about each episode. Posted in alt.tv.er.
RANDOM ENTRY: "Kerry must work the fewest hours of any chief resident in history. Last year, while Mark was wallowing in his sorrow, he missed the disaster drill page by Willie, so we know the chief should have the pager on for disasters. Multiple burn patients seem like a disaster enough to bring in the chief resident."

CHICAGO HOPE

http://www-cs students.stanford.edu/~clee/ch/summaries.html
AUTHOR: Collaborative. (Editor: Yolette Nicholson)
WHY BOTHER?: "It's important to capture the flavor and the rhythm of a show as well as the main plot points," says regular summary writer Diane Rosenfeldt.
***IU* RATING:** ★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Well-written, complete with a lot of dialogue. ("I tape each episode and transcribe them at work," Rosenfeldt says.) There are only about 12 summaries however, so the list is not comprehensive.
RANDOM ENTRY: Dr. Danny Nyland is pacing agitatedly in a deserted operating room when Dr. Jeffrey Geiger bursts in.

"What's going on?" Geiger demands. "I get stat paged to OR 4, where's the emergency?"

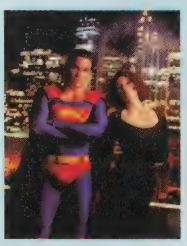
"It's not an emergency," Nyland says. He asks if Geiger remembers Georgeann Tuckman, a recent patient. Nyland had called Geiger in on a consult, and at first they had thought she had myocarditis, then the flu. "I didn't think the flu," Geiger interrupts. "I thought it was some kind of virus she probably snagged at the CDC."

Nyland says, "You were right, more right than you want to be. She was just diagnosed in Seattle—Ebola virus."

Geiger grimaces, and after a long silence, asks quietly, "How contagious?"

LOIS AND CLARK UPDATE

http://www.ms.uky.edu/~sykes/lc/
AUTHOR: Jeff Sykes
WHY BOTHER?: "I originally began the episode guides because of my love of Superman as a character, and when someone mentioned there should be one. I later decided that the detailed episode summaries would be beneficial, especially to those without access to videotapes."



***IU* RATING:** ★★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Although the show is in its third season, the comprehensive summaries cease in the second season. The site is well-organized, however, and easy to navigate.
RANDOM ENTRY: In the *Daily Planet* newsroom, the staff is celebrating the exposing of a car theft ring by star reporter Lois Lane, while outside the building young Clark Kent arrives in Metropolis, hoping to become a member of their illustrious news team. Before he can make his way inside, he spots a bus careening wildly down the street, its brakes inoperable. Without a thought, he rushes into the street, sets himself in front of the bus, and stops it with a single hand, leaving a deep hand print in the front molding and an astonished look on the face of a bystander.

NYPD BLUE PAGE

http://www.stwing.upenn.edu/~sepinwal/nypd.html
AUTHOR: Alan Sepinwal
WHY BOTHER?: There was a need, Sepinwall says. "I've got a very good memory when it comes to useless entertainment knowledge, so I figured I'd oblige. But since I'm also really anal retentive about this sort of thing, I went into far more detail than I'd anticipated."
***IU* RATING:** ★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: The *NYPD Blue* Page helps define a format for television summaries. It is a serious take on a serious show, offering thoughtful analysis.

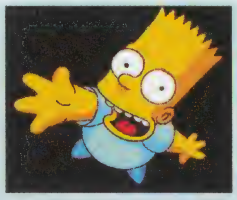
RANDOM ENTRY: Sipowicz and Simone get called in on a murder at a gay bar—the club's co-owner was found tied up and shot in his office on the night the bar has "Drag Night." Bobby comments that the method of tying up is very similar to a murderer he put away years ago, but that guy is supposed to still be in jail. A transsexual witness tells Andy that the bar's bouncer gave the dead man mouth-to-mouth, which makes Andy suspicious—why try to breathe life into a guy whose head is practically blown off?

BABYLON 5 LURKER'S GUIDE

http://www.hyperion.com/lurk/eplist.html#previous
AUTHORS: Steven Grimm, Matthew Murray and Katrina Glerum
WHY BOTHER: "I like the show and want to share that pleasure with other people," Grimm says. "The more people I can get hooked on the show, the better the chance it'll run to its completion."
***IU* RATING:** ★★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: The summaries are comprehensive and the site itself is incredible. The show's creator is a regular contributor to the discussions. *Babylon 5* was created with a five-year storyline mapped out from the start, so the summaries are even more crucial to someone just getting involved in the show.
RANDOM ENTRY: Boggs' claim that the Minbari "think [Delenn]'s the second coming!" indicates that many among the Minbari agree with Delenn's assessment of herself as the chosen one, the vehicle of prophecy (see also "Comes the InQuisitor"). Marcus also hints at this when he tells Delenn that his brother believed in the Rangers and in her; apparently her involvement with them is richer in symbolism than has previously been hinted at. How, and whether, that relates to the nature of Sinclair's involvement remains to be seen.

THE SIMPSONS EPISODE GUIDE

http://www.cyberspc.mb.ca/~davehall/episodes.html
AUTHORS: Dave Hall and Mark Holtz
WHY BOTHER?: Holtz started the summaries, and Hall took it over in 1994. Hall says the summaries are especially helpful to fans trying to complete their video collection. Those who live overseas also like it because they can keep up to date with the series and know which episodes to find when they return home.
***IU* RATING:** ★★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Considering *The Simpsons* has been on the air for nearly eight seasons, the fact that every episode is carefully summarized is impressive enough. Highly detailed dialogue makes the summaries especially comprehensive.



RANDOM ENTRY: "The fire spreads to Ned's house, and Homer notes, 'Hey. Flanders is a regular Charlie Church, and God didn't save *his* house.' A tiny cloud forms over the Flanders house, the rain douses the fire, and the damage is sealed with a rainbow. The insurance representative arrives and asks 'Any valuables in the house?'

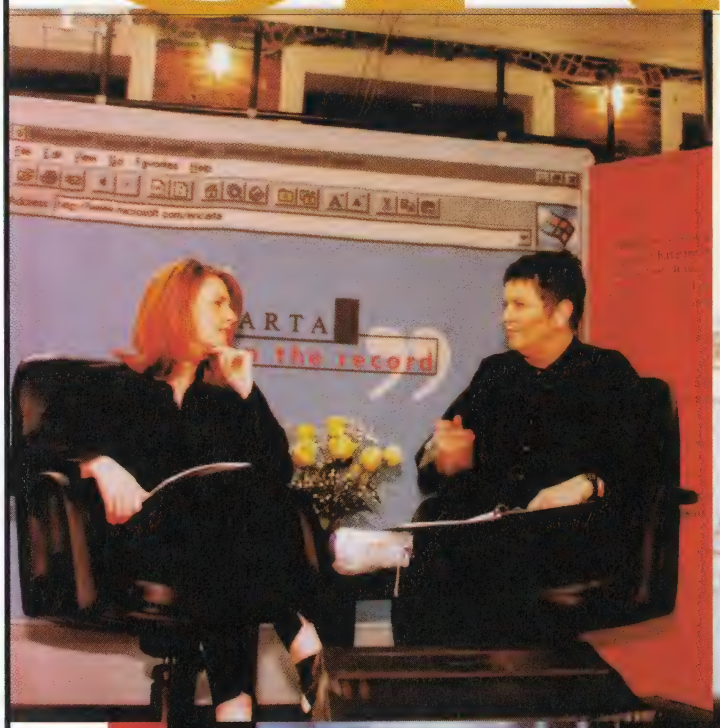
Homer replies, 'Well, the Picasso, my collection of classic cars...' The insurance agent says, 'Sorry, this policy only covers actual losses, not made-up stuff.'

A miffed Homer replies, 'Well, that's just great!'"

THE X-FILES

http://www.thex-files.com/episode.htm
AUTHOR: Official
WHY BOTHER?: Promotes the show.
***IU* RATING:** ★★
CRITIC'S CORNER: Excellent site with multimedia and decent-length summaries. But it is official, which detracts from some of the appeal. Summaries act more as a "teaser," with few offering the end of show's story line.
RANDOM ENTRY: "Dana Scully's father dies suddenly after a visit, and she is shocked when he appears to her in a vision. In her newly vulnerable state, she is deeply disturbed by a North Carolina death row inmate, Luther Lee Boggs, who claims to be able to channel the spirits of the dead, and is willing to trade information about a kidnapping in exchange for commutation of his sentence. Mulder thinks the whole scheme is a hoax, but Scully is troubled by doubt."

ON THE



A motley mix: (Above left) Ellerbee with MTV News reporter Tabitha Soren. (Above) Pat Schroeder, Donna Rice Hughes, John Perry Barlow, Ellerbee and Jerry Falwell.

Photos by Paul Hurschmann

it's

ironic that Linda Ellerbee is now hosting an online talk show, considering that her TV journalism career began when she hit the wrong computer key. Instead of printing out a letter to a friend, she inadvertantly sent the letter out over the AP network. This wouldn't have been a problem except that in the letter, she suggested that her boss might rid himself of any discriminatory guilt by hiring a "half-black Chicano lesbian who could handle the AP stylebook." Ellerbee was promptly and thoroughly fired, but a Houston TV station owner liked her moxie and offered her a job. Ellerbee said she was neither interested nor qualfied to write for television. He said the job paid twice as much as AP. Ellerbee said she thought she could learn.

By Kathleen Flinn

a.

d

The pioneering journalist goes On The Record with Microsoft

NET WITH LINDA ELLERBEE

b.

Since then, Ellerbee has become an award-winning journalist. She co-hosted NBC News *Overnight*, cited by the Columbia duPont Awards as "the best written and most intelligent news program ever." She also won an Emmy for her work on the ABC prime-time historical series *Our World* in 1986. On that set, if they looked carefully, viewers could see a small fuzzy duck that she would touch before each show, for luck. Ellerbee took the duck with her when she decided to start her own company after leaving ABC, dubbing it Lucky Duck Productions. Lucky Duck has earned a reputation as a producer of outstanding children's programming through the critically acclaimed weekly news and documentary series ***Nick News***. The show, which Ellerbee produces, writes and hosts, has won many honors including a 1995 Emmy and a Peabody Award, the highest merit in broadcast news.

Ellerbee recounted some of the more entertaining elements of her career and commentary about the occasional absurdity of TV news in the 1986 best-selling book, *And So It Goes... Adventures in Television.* In the book, Ellerbee blasted what she called "Twinkie Journalism," shallow reporting by even shallower reporters all in the name of ratings. She talked of "riding the elephant," a phrase she used to describe the stunts performed in local TV that reporters invariably regret—even though they may seem like a good idea at the time. "Circuses know television will cover the elephant walk every year, and every year some idiot television reporter will ride the elephant for his story."

Her second book, *Move On: Adventures in the Real World*, addressed some of the weightier aspects of Ellerbee's life with her standard frank and forthright manner, including her battle with breast cancer four years ago that required a double mastectomy.

This spring, Ellerbee brought her expertise to *On the Record,* a series of monthly multimedia "talk shows" developed by Microsoft and its Encarta encyclopedia division. Conducted live at New York City's @Café, *On the Record* brought together guests by any means necessary—online, via satellite, by phone and in person. Those who "watched" the show as it unfolded in real time could ask questions by the same manner. They could also review detailed information about the show's topic or guests before posting a comment or question. The result? A well-informed, interactive event far from television's talking head and sound byte format and beyond the normal celebrity chat sessions. You can read the session archives at **http://www.msn.com/encarta/otr/.**

Internet Underground chatted with Ellerbee in between interviews for the projects she's constantly juggling to ask her about Microsoft, the impact of the Internet on society and the whereabouts of her lucky duck.

Internet Underground: Microsoft is going after a lot of high-profile journalists, such as Michael Kinsley. For a company that's been criticized in the past for focusing more on marketing than on its primary business, technology, do you think these lineups are more marketing efforts or genuine attempts to produce quality journalistic products?

Linda Ellerbee: I don't think that the two are necessarily incompatible. For example, I run a TV production company. I'm in the business to make money. But how I choose to do that is up to me. We don't do shows we're not proud to put our name to, we don't do gutter talk shows. So I think there's nothing wrong with wanting to make money. I think that with the show that we've been working on, they've not been making money on that. I think that's been a clear effort to try something and see if it worked. Part of the mission of Encarta was to see if we could use the familiarity that younger people have with technology to bring them to the issues and get them interested in issues. So if Microsoft makes a million off that, I still think that it's a great idea to have done.

IU: Do you think that this kind of approach, using the Internet, is necessary since a lot of younger people do not seem to be embracing the more traditional mediums?

LE: Yeah, I think it's a real good idea. One research center just put out a study that I was reading about this morning on people and the press. I found this fantastic, but

c.

42 percent of the population now says it watches a nightly network news show. That's down from 60 percent in 1993. Now, these viewers are going somewhere, and they're not going to newspapers.

IU: Many young people see newspapers as dull and not addressing their interests, and see TV news as being very formulaic, that they don't like the sound byte approach. Now that they realize that the Internet allows for whole transcripts, not just words filtered through a producer or editor. Is that what they seem to want?

LE: Yes, I think that's true. What's been wonderful is that of the four shows we've done so far, the topics have not been "Gee, my mother is really my sister" kind of shows. What's been wonderful is that those who have gone *On The Record* clearly wanted to know more. Clearly they had ideas, they had questions and they were interested. They were active participants.

I think that they like that. It draws them in.

IU: You're getting people talking to you from all over the place, online, at the @Café via satellite, long distance by telephone.

LE: Oh yeah, It's the most multimedia thing in existence right now.

IU: Is it difficult to establish a rapport with people that way, or keep track of all that different information?

LE: It's interesting. If I had not been doing television for 25 years, it would be terrifying. When people ask me what it's like, I say it's like television without a camera. I have two or three people sitting next to me. Then I have two or three different television screens that we're looking at and we can hear them and they can hear us. Then we have all these people coming in over the telephone and then all the people coming in online. It's a bit of a juggling act, but a fascinating one. It's really cool.

IU: How do your guests react to that? You're used to the crazy, hectic pace of a TV set, but are they?

LE: They seem to like it, once they catch on that they can actually be sitting on a telephone and be having an argument with someone on a satellite that is being passed through a room with live people in it, then someone else is taking down those words and it's going out online. Once they get used to it, it doesn't stop them at all. This last week, I had [MIT] professor Lester Thurow calling Al Dunlap, the former head of Scott Paper Company who fired 11,000 people, a liar. And one is sitting next to me and one is on a television set. Then [author] Barbara Ehrenreich is on the phone saying that maybe he's only *half* a liar. I was sitting there thinking, 'this is cool.' We did not have to sit in this room together. We did not have to approach this in the typical Sunday morning talk show Sam Donaldson way to generate some heat and hopefully some light as well.

IU: With television, people onscreen just talk to people at home. With the Internet, they talk back.

LE: Absolutely they talk back. That's the whole point of it all. They *finally* get to talk back. It's about time.

IU: Are they saying what you thought they would say?

LE: I am always surprised. Because the minute you think you know what people are going to say, they will say something else. Also, I am always amazed by the eloquence. In the May show, there's a letter from a man in Pillsbury, it will break your heart. It's just something very special, what he wrote. And that's something that he would not have gotten on a television news talk show. First, he would have never gotten on air. Second, he would have never had the chance to sit down and collect his thoughts to write out what he wanted to say and then put it there, on the record, and make people like Chainsaw Al listen to it.

IU: The Web reminds me of a line from your book *And So It Goes…* In it, you remark, "It's television, it's *only* television." Do you think the same phrase, "It's the Internet, it's only the Internet" is also applicable?

LE: Yes, it is applicable. We need to make up new words too, I keep saying, 'When do we air?' But we *don't* air. There's this whole vocabulary we're going to need to develop. But, you're right. It's the Internet. It's *only* the Internet. We can't forget that. It's not brain surgery, it's not even television!

IU: In the same book, you also talked about "riding the elephant," doing something as a reporter that you know you'll regret later. Is there an Internet equivalent to riding the elephant?

LE: I don't know, but I know when we started this project someone said, are you afraid? And I said only someone who has spent the last 25 years making a fool of herself in front of large groups of people could come into this show knowing that there are going to be mistakes, there will be screw-ups and that it's okay. The world won't come to an end. But so far, I haven't had to ride the elephant. I think I'm past my elephant riding days.

IU: In many ways, television seems to have really declined, with tabloid journalism and talk shows about cross-dressing half-brothers and so on. Do you think that with so many choices, but nothing worthwhile, television may unwittingly be driving away viewers to online mediums?

LE: I absolutely think so. One of the biggest phenomenons about television is people's feeling of powerlessness about it. They watch and they think, 'I have no power over it. There's no letter I can write to a network president. There's no tube of toothpaste that I can avoid using. There is nothing that I can do. They [the network executives] are on the mountain and I am down here and this is what they have chosen to give me.' Now, on the Internet, that feeling doesn't exist.

IU: One thing that has struck me about the Internet is that people talked about the decline of writing and reading in the past few years. As someone who has spent her life writing, do you think that the writing intensive nature of the Internet will have a big impact?

LE: I really do. It makes everyone a writer. First off, it's so fast. Secondly, you can print it in type that doesn't look like it's from a typewriter. The first time you write something down and put it in something that looks like book type and you print it out, all of a sudden, boy, you go, 'Huh! I'm a writer!' How can that not affect, but infect, a new generation and interest them in writing? I think this can only be a good thing.

IU: Where is your fuzzy duck?

LE: I'm looking at him right now. He's on a shelf here right next to my desk.

IU: Has he brought you luck?

LE: I would say he's brought me a great deal of luck. My company is doing well. I've got work that I love. I've been clear of cancer for four years. How much luckier can you get?

spotlight

A closer look at this month's #1 site

http://www.best.com/~snopes/disney/disney.htm

Everyone knows Walt Disney is frozen. The father of Mickey, Minnie, Donald and the entire Disney empire, is in a cryonic chamber, awaiting the day he can be, pardon the pun, reanimated. Right?

Wrong, according to David Mikkelson, whose Disney Urban Legends page, (**http://www.best.com/~snopes/disney/disney.htm**) finally puts to rest the notion that Walt's body is frozen (he was cremated, as per his wishes). Some two dozen other Disney legends ranging from the existence of a secret club at Disneyland (it's there), to allegations that one of the three little pigs molested a park guest (never happened) to a castle spire that resembles a phallus on the original *Little Mermaid* poster (judge for yourself) are explored at Mikkelson's page.

DISNEY URBAN FOLKLORE ENTHUSIAST DAVID MIKKELSON WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH. HERE HE AND HIS WIFE BARBARA INTERROGATE MICKEY ABOUT RUMORS THAT HE'S JUST A COLLEGE KID WEARING A COSTUME.

Mikkelson, who lives in the San Fernando Valley where he works as an e-mail administrator for a large HMO, is an urban folklore junkie. He says he spends on average between two and three hours a day researching urban legends and building his pages. Yes, pages. The Disney site is only one of three reference pages Mikkelson maintains. One catalogs college legends and at press time Mikkelson was finishing up a sex page.

So far the Disney page has proven much more popular than the college one. "Not that many people search for 'college,' generically like they do 'Disney,' says Mikkelson, who adds that from looking at referring pages he's found a surprising number of people link to his site by doing searches for "naked Disney."

A long-time veteran of the alt.urban.folklore newsgroup, Mikkelson learned the only true way to convince people one way or the other on a legend was to have documented proof. Thus on each page of his site, Mikkelson includes a complete list of sources, an all-too-often overlooked feature at the majority of Web sites.

Exploring his page you'll also see mention of The San Fernando Valley Folklore Society, a group in which Mikkelson is the only true member. "I created this mythical society and made up some nice letterhead that named me as the public affairs officer," says Mikkelson. With the weight of the Society name, Mikkelson was able to go to sources directly and ask them to confirm or deny stories. The results are usually favorable, but one time he repeatedly tried to contact sci-fi writer Harlan Ellison to ask about a legend involving the writer and a tall blonde (the details are at **http://www.best.com/~snopes/sex/celebrit/ellison.htm**). "He called me up and just began to chew me out on the phone," Mikkelson recounts, "but once he calmed down, he kept calling me back every day for about a week to apologize and give me more information." That Ellison legend is detailed at the sex site, but oddly enough there's also a story about Ellison proposing to make an animated porno film at the Disney page.

Another demonstration of Mikkelson's Mulderesque determination can be seen in his examination of the secret Club 33 at Disneyland. Once verifying the club's existence, Mikkelson was obsessed with gaining entrance, but membership fees are very prohibitive and there was something like a three-year waiting list. So he took out a want ad looking for members of the club. The ad unfortunately ran in the personals section—"I got so many lewd phone calls, saying they'd get me in the club in exchange for various 'favors,'" he recounts. Fortunately a guy who owned a Corvette dealership and was a member also read the ad. "He called me up and said he admired the way I was like him, that if I wanted something I'd go out and get it." Now when Mikkelson wants to visit the club all he has to do is call the car dealer's secretary and she makes the reservations. Mikkelson goes to Club 33 for dinner three or four times a year, and he's still never met his mysterious benefactor.

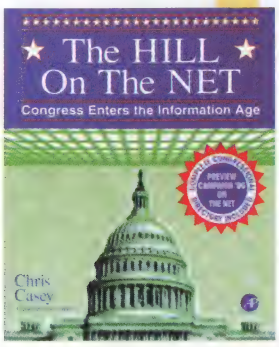
His dogged pursuit of the truth about Disney has had other rewards. Growing frustrated by people perpetuating the frozen Walt legend on the newsgroups, a couple of years ago Mikkelson jokingly asked for volunteers to help him dig up Disney's grave. Only one person e-mailed him offering to help out with the excavation. That like-minded volunteer is now Mikkelson's like-minded wife; the two were married this past April.

Reviews

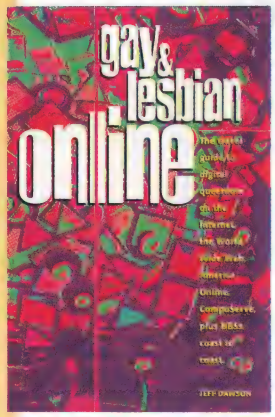
The Hill on the Net: Congress Enters the Information Age
by Chris Casey
AP Professional
$19.95
★★★★

Chris Casey, Sen. Ted Kennedy's former technology policy advisor and the current advisor of the Senate Democratic Technology and Communications Committee has written a fascinating look at the impact of the Internet on American politics. *The Hill on the Net* is not a simple collection of political links, but a true insider's look at the wiring of Congress. Casey starts with C-SPAN, the TV network that brought the inner dealings of the Hill into our living rooms and goes all the wat to the 'net's effects on this year's campaigns. Along the way, Casey presents several entertaining sidetrips, such as mini-profiles of the most digitally competent Congress members (Sen. Exon is not among them). Of course, no book like this would be complete without the filler and how-to's, but there's more wheat here than chaff. *The Hill on the Net* is a joy to read for both veteran 'net users and Ludite political junkies.

—Alex Gordon



Gay & Lesbian Online
by Jeff Dawson
Peachpit Press
$15.95
★★★★

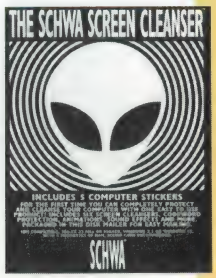


By now, guidebooks to segments of the Internet are commonplace: kids' guides, the sports fan's handbook, science buffs' online companion. For newbies these tomes are as indispensable as those 10 free hours. The next natural boom area of these texts may be those who graduated from their hefty reference manuals to thinner volumes addressing more specific topics. In *Gay & Lesbian Online*, this approach works, offering directions to resources that may be a little more difficult to find in the heavily trafficked ether. The book is broken into sections that range from AIDS and homophobia to Madonna and Wigstock. Each section has a brief description of the Internet resources for that topic and of course, the requisite list of URLs.

Again, these guidebooks are primarily for newbies, but you have to admire the spirit of the book. Dawson, a veteran computer writer, has done his homework.

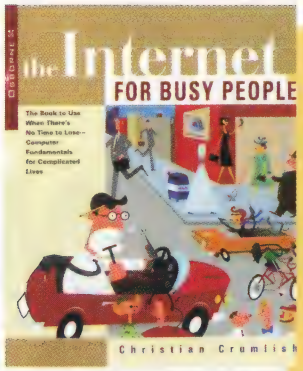
—Lynn Clark

The Schwa Screen Cleanser
by Schwa
$15.00
★★★



The aliens are coming. You know it. I know it. We all know it. What are we going to do about it—that's the big question. Well, I don't know 'bout you, but I got myself a Schwa Screen Cleanser so none of them big-headed alien freaks is going to try to use my copy of Excel. The Schwa Screen Cleanser set comes with six different fully animated cleansers to purge your computer of any alien presence. The cleansers also work as nifty screen savers, and even though Eudora kept crashing when I had the screen cleanser activated, I blame the secret microwave signal emitted from a secret government installation on the moon, not Schwa. I even received some stickers with the package that should help me further ward off evil aliens. As the last line of defense, the cleanser set comes with a codeword protection program, 'cause you just know those aliens are clever folk. Now if you'll excuse me, I got some mashed potatoes to sculpt.

—Roy Neary



The Internet For Busy People
By Christian Crumlish
Osborne/McGraw-Hill
$22.95
★★★ ½

This book should really be titled "The Internet for Busy People Using Windows 95™" as it ignores the use of Windows 3.1, Macintosh or other platforms. (God forbid you're stuck with Lynx!) With happy cartoons and a lot of color, this book explains simply even the more involved elements of the Internet such as IRC, Telnet, gopher and searching for e-mail addresses using WHOIS. The writing is concise and straightforward, although it does sometimes go overboard with the "dummy factor," such as when it shows where to click on the boxes that come on screen when you sign onto the Microsoft Network *(duh!)* just a few pages after the author finishes explaining in minute detail how to sign up for an infinitely more complicated SLIP account.The book also ignores CompuServe, America Online and other online services in favor of MSN, which is never explained. And it's not as if MSN is so complicated that it warrants an entire chapter devoted to it. Also, if you have time to read all 260 pages of this book, then go online to hang out in MUDs, chat up IRC and surf the Web, are you *really* all that busy? This isn't a bad book, though. If you do use Windows 95 and know zero about the 'net, it's a fine basic primer. But avoid it if you're using another platform and look for a book more dedicated to that arena.
—Kathleen Flinn

Designing for the Web
By Jennifer Niederst
O'Reilly & Associates
$24.95
★★★★½

What I like best about this book is that it's not big; it compacts a lot of straightforward, useful information in its 164 pages. Niederst works as creative director of Songline Studios, a collaborative effort between GNN and O'Reilly that has produced some of the Web's most graphically inviting sites, such as the *Web Review* and the serial site Ferndale. With collaborator Edie Freedman, Niederst, has avoided the trap into which so many Web design authors seem to have fallen, namely trying to cover so much ground that the hefty books are of little value.

Instead, *Designing for the Web* provides a basic explanation of how to put together a Web page in clear, concise and easy-to-follow language that takes the mystery out of what is really a pretty simple task. This is clearly a book for those with a background in design or a good eye for graphics who already know how to use basic computer design tools such as Photoshop (which she uses in many examples, although never explains how to use). Niederst also doesn't offer much advanced education, nor does she try to teach basic elements of design; she wrote this for readers who already know how to design or are willing to get that education elsewhere. Or learn how to elements of Web design the old-fashioned way—by trial and error.
—Kathleen Flinn

LET YOUR MODEM DO THE WALKING

With Yahoo!, Lycos, AltaVista and the rest of the search engines battling it out to be the best cataloger of the Web, a new arena of conflict has emerged: Internet white pages. With names such as Four11, Whowhere and Okra, these sites, basically databases of e-mail addresses and related information, work on the same model as their search engine cousins. Most of the white pages get their listings through a combination of patrolling Usenet and the Web for addresses and having users who visit the site register their own addresses. The directories may raise privacy issues or heighten fears of dreaded "get rich quick" mailings for many, but we'll leave that to the features department to cover.

Four11
http://www.four11.com/

Price: Free basic service, enhanced service varies.
Number of listings: 6.5 million
The catch: Basic searches are free, but expanded searches (by state, organization, domain) require you to enter your own listing. Or, for $4 you can get a souped-up service; see site for complete details.
Interesting features: The ability to search by topics like workplace, hometown, high school, college, etc. A smart name feature looks not only for "Bob" but "Robert." Ability to search via Yahoo! VideoPhone and Internet Telephone Directory. Also has extensive phone listings.
Ads: Yes
The *IU* Test: (Number of listings for various names): Alex Gordon-11, Bob Dole-19, Sandra Bullock-6, Marlon Brando-5

Internet Address Finder
http://www.iaf.net/

Price: Free
Number of listings: 3.9 million
The catch: None
Interesting features: Wildcard searches (for example Alex Go***n). Repeatedly claims it is the biggest database, despite evidence to the contrary.
Ads: yes
***IU* Test Results: Alex Gordon-4, Bob Dole-9, Sandra Bullock-5, Marlon Brando-3**

Okra http://okra.ucr.edu/okra/

Price: Free
Number of listings: 5.3 million
The catch: None
Interesting features: Big smiley faces rate the results of your search, built and maintained by students at the University of California at Riverside.
Ads: No
***IU* Test Results: Alex Gordon-4, Bob Dole-7, Sandra Bullock-7, Marlon Brando-1**

Bigfoot
http://bigfoot.com/

Price: Free
Number of listings: Not available
The catch: Most of the listings are from people who joined.
Interesting features: Bigfoot Around the World allows you to search in French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.
Ads: No
***IU* Test Results: Alex Gordon-0, Bob Dole-0, Sandra Bullock-0, Marlon Brando-0**

Whowhere
http://www.whowhere.com/

Price: Free
Number of listings: 8 million
The catch: None
Interesting features: Directory of people and companies. Searchable by initials. Also contains a directory of real addresses and phone numbers. Rates responses.
Ads: Yes
***IU* Test Results:** Alex Gordon-5, Bob Dole-15, Sandra Bullock-7, Marlon Brando-8

Guide to Volcanologists on the Internet
http://www.aist.go.jp/GSJ/~jdehn/vnews/vlist1.htm

Price: Free
Number of listings: Not given, but looks to be around 200
The catch: Only lists people who are volcanologists or "individuals who wished to be identified as interested in volcanology, rather than full-fledged volcanologists."
Interesting features: Most comprehensive list of volcanologists on the Web
Ads: No
***IU* Test Results: Alex Gordon-0, Bob Dole-0, Sandra Bullock-0, Marlon Brando-0**

>FAQ

Name (real or screen):
Matthew "The Captain" Kurth
Age: 20
Gender: Male
Home: Marengo, Illinois
e-mail address: mkurth@wwa.com

Each month, we profile people who oversee newsgroups or take on the normally thankless task of compiling Frequently Asked Question files. We do so through a list of standard questions, hence the name FAQ. (Ha!) This month, we talked with the keeper of the FAQ for the newsgroup that keeps tabs on Groundskeeper Willie, Troy McClure and Ralph Wiggum, alt.tv.simpsons.

Can you explain alt.tv.simpsons and its purpose?
Alt.tv.simpsons is dedicated to the discussion of pretty much all aspects of the TV show *The Simpsons*.

How did you get involved with it?
I've been a fan of *The Simpsons* since the series premiere in 1989, and when I came to the Internet in December 1993 it was among the first places I sought out to discuss my favorite show.

Do you have a day job? If so, what is it?
I'm executive producer of Headline News Local Edition in DeKalb, Ill., a twice-daily 6-minute newscast that runs on DeKalb-area cable.

What's a typical conversation thread like?
There really is no "typical" conversation. Topics run from analysis of the episodes, to favorite characters, episodes, scenes, etc., to discussion of the different emphases used by various executive producers.

Who is your favorite character and why?
My favorite character is Lisa Simpson because of her intelligence, wit and proficiency with the sax. Plus—and I know I'll catch a lot of flack for saying this, but I don't care—I think she was very beautiful as a 25-year-old (in the episode "Lisa's Wedding") and I'd like to punch Hugh Parkfield for being such a jerk to her.

What are your favorite episodes?
"Lisa's Substitute" and "Bart Gets an F" because of the way they deal with the characters' emotions. People think of Bart as being an "underachiever and proud of it" or just being a brat, but "Bart Gets an F" shows a side of him we don't see much of. We also see a lot of things in "Lisa's Substitute" that often go overlooked in popular perception, like Lisa's feelings and the absence of a strong role model in her life, and we get reminded that Homer really is a good guy, even though he's bumbling. "Bart the General" is also another meaningful episode to me, because as a kid I had bully troubles, and Bart actually did what I only dreamed of doing to retaliate.

Describe your computer area:
Of course my desk is messy. I'm a hopeless sentimental romantic and a pack rat. Above my desk is a storyboard from "Animaniacs" and a beautiful cel of Lisa from "Lisa the Greek."

What are some of your favorite postings?
There have been some really great responses made on a.t.s with regard to the recurring thread about how Lisa is boring or is the worst character on the show. A guy named Einsturzende Cyber once made the reply, "Lisa rules. You're just jealous because a cartoon is smarter than you."

Do you have a screen saver? If so, what's on it?
The Simpsons' screen saver, of course!

Where do you think the Internet is going and how will it affect society?
Society has to decide (and decide quickly) whether it wants to allow something like the Web to become a commercial media like television or stay largely private. There was once a time when you could "surf the 'net" regardless of whether you were on a Commodore 64 with a 300-baud modem or if you were on a Sun Sparc connected via ISDN. The push created by Netscape, however, is driving out the little guy, and even the not-so-little guy. I've got a Pentium on a 28.8 PPP link, and even it gets bogged down. Currently you've got a lot of fan-run pages for things like NBA teams or TV shows which are slick enough to outdo the professional pages, and you're seeing companies like Time Warner and 20th Century Fox issue cease-and-desist letters to fans with a couple of framegrabs on their sites, which to me is ludicrous.

The Internet is capable of breaking down the last barriers left to mankind on this mudball we call Earth. Age, gender, orientation, handicap. It doesn't really matter when all you see are characters on the screen. That makes literacy and typing/grammar skills very important for the next century, because you'll start to see discrimination online on the basis of typing ability, and I don't think it will be pretty. The biggest challenge is how to narrow the gap between the technological haves and have-nots so that people can have equal access to information. That will determine whether the 'net will remain a mostly elite media for the informed, or whether it will become a tool for the masses.

What would people be surprised to find out about you?
Well, I don't know how surprised people would be to find this out, but what a lot of people don't know for sure is that I just have this huge crush on Lisa Simpson as a 25-year-old. I think the coolest thing in the world would be to do the voice of her future husband on the show, and I'll even do it for free.

Finally, why is ALT.TV.SIMPSONS important?
Alt.tv.simpsons is important in my opinion because it brings people together to talk about one of the best shows on television, and gives the writers a way to keep their collective finger on the pulse of the fans of the show they work on. It also provides a place for the curious to learn that yes, Smithers *is* gay, Bart's middle name is JoJo and Maggie costs $847.63 in the opening titles of the show.

(Behind Closed Doors)

403 Forbidden

Expanding Loving

BY RYAM NEARING

WHEN A MAN LOVES A WOMAN,

AND ANOTHER WOMAN,

AND A MAN...

Although biologically 98 percent of all mammals are non-monogamous, I have nothing against people who want a one and only. My focus lies on the rest of us who find that life and love are just not so neat and tidy. This includes couples who open their hearts to include another woman or man, singles who live alone but who have loving connections in several other major cities and larger families of five or six adults who live together in complex, committed relationships lasting decades.

Loving More is the name of our Web site (and the magazine that we've been publishing for 12 years for a small but very devoted readership). It's about polyamory—a new word that means "to love many." Contrast it with monogamy, which means "to love one."

Myself, I'm legally married to my high school sweetheart, plus married (in essence) to the father of my 4-month-old baby. We also live with another former male lover of mine as well as my husband's other partner. That's five adults and one child.

It began for us the way it does for many people who discover this lifestyle. You're deeply in love with your partner, but then fall in love with another person as well. The only "acceptable" response in our culture is to make a choice, one or the other. If you're "poly" you find such requirements of church, state or social convention restricting; to you, loving only one person at a time may seem to get in the way of what comes naturally in your life.

Other folks find their poly nature when they experience the richness of more than one lover in some kind of intentional community or spiritual teaching, like Tantra. After years of serial monogamy—one relationship following another—others decide it might be less emotionally stressful not to automatically end one relationship when they start another. In practice, what limits people in this regard is not what's possible, but what we will allow.

Polyamorists believe that it's not only possible, but in many cases even *preferable* to keep your lovers instead of dumping them for someone else.

I know the battery of questions. What about AIDS? What about commitment? What about kids? What about jealousy?

Great questions. And we have simple, but maybe not easy, answers on our FAQ page. Plus we respond in depth to the relationship specifics on which readers want advice. (We also offer real-life stories, how-to articles and resources on expanded relationships.)

Intimate networks, open coupling and group marriage have been invisible in our society. Generally, only free-thinkers or those in the midst of their own relationship crisis have had the energy to dig for information on other options in relationship forms. You can now learn more about polyamory in one hit of our site than you could in the past with years of research.

Since a great deal of people who love many are in the closet, our personal ads, message board and simple chat page allow for an exchange of experience and support that has rarely been possible previously. Several times a week we get comments such as "we thought we were the only ones who felt like this—we felt so alone until now." After all, if your lover tells you she wants to be with another man or woman, but doesn't want to leave you, what are your options? If you had never considered polyamory before, suddenly our site becomes a lifesaver.

Our view is that there is too much unnecessary heartbreak in the world. If you hadn't noticed, our culture's dominant paradigm doesn't seem to be working all that well. We invite everyone to consider new models for relationships. Even if you're not interested now, maybe one day you'll be looking us up.

RYAM NEARING IS CO-EDITOR OF *LOVING MORE* MAGAZINE, AVAILABLE ONLINE AT HTTP://WWW.LOVEMORE.COM

403 Forbidden is written by guest columnists whose views do not necessarily reflect those of the completely prurient *IU* staff. Our mothers raised us to be upstanding, non-deviant citizens. However, if your interests fall within some alternative aspect of the 'net that you would like to share with our readers, write us at IU@mcs.net.

Revenge of the Spammers

(Skewering The Faulty)

Overzealous Spamhunters Made Things Worse

by paul alexander

In just four months, the Red Pages site was flamed out of existence. Conceived by Albuquerque's MiniTel phone company entrepreneur, Larry Host, the service had been created to address the direct-mail advertising, or spamming, controversy that has been and remains a source of endless debate on the 'net. In the same way that the Direct Mail Association holds the list of "do not mail to" postal addresses of individuals who don't want their home mailboxes bombarded with mountains of L.L. Bean and J.C. Penney merchant catalogs, the Red Pages service was designed to compile a list of Internet users who didn't want to receive unsolicited electronic advertisements, or spams, in their e-mail boxes. All a user would have to do to be listed in the Red Pages and removed from any potential commercial or spammer hitlist was to contact Host via e-mail, snail mail or phone.

But thanks to a handful of self-anointed, self-important "spamhunters" (see "Fistful of Spam" *IU* #6) who mistakenly thought the site was somehow trying to promote spamming on the 'net, the Red Pages service, which was possibly the beginning of the end to the whiny and vengeful dispute, is now completely defunct. Host's carrier grew tired of the costly mail bombs (an anonymous user e-mailed a CD-ROM version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to Host's e-mail five times), and Host himself became frustrated with the radical "spamhunters" who had raised enormous expenses for him by continually dialing his 800 number. In fact, one crazed California resident redialed his 800 number 1,037 times, only to be outdone by an Ontario resident who called 2,131 times.

Granted, Host's service might have been better received had he initially listed the entire Internet community's e-mails on the Red Pages' "do not mail to" list, instead of forcing users to sign up at his site. But the service was the start of a smart, employable idea. Host even managed to get the infamous spamming headman, Jeff Slaton (among others) to agree to respect the Red Pages service and not send unsolicited direct mail to users who signed up on the list.

But when Slaton began helping Host with his Red Pages project by collecting e-mails of particularly irate spam-haters that he thought would want to be automatically added to the "do not mail to" list, an unreasonable spam witch hunt erupted—spamhunters couldn't accept the fact that Slaton was upstaging them with Host's proposal to reach a compromise between advertisers and the Internet community. They killed the project just out of spite. According to Host, who's eminently cynical about the whole affair, "when certain people got wind of this project, they got new e-mail addresses just so that they could receive spams and continue their hobby of flaming."

Well, Slaton rightly fought back. This past April, Slaton (it's presumed) spammed the Internet with an offer to sell Lightning Bolt 1.0 and 2.0, his proprietary spamming programs. Both Lightning Bolt Unix shell programs are capable of searching and finding e-mail addresses, and removing duplicate addresses and non-deliverables. The 2.0 upgrade is also capable of sending millions of spams to Usenet groups and private e-mail addresses while the user is logged off. Slaton has promised to sell 400 copies of Lightning Bolt 2.0, at a cost of $249, to interested Internet direct marketers.

Now, these so-called spamhunters, with their affectations of righteousness and their high claims of bringing a sense of integrity to the 'net, have to contend with 400 newly born Slatons. And you know, while I would never condone spamming as it exists today, Slaton's response to sell his software seems appropriate—a just response to those who preach 'netiquette and online virtue, but who are nothing more than a bunch of uncompromising ninnies who flame for fun.

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We don't simply parrot what the companies **preach.**

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AUN076

WebGuide

America's golden boy, Forrest Gump, would say "the Web is like a box of chocolates..." *Internet Underground*, hardly as gentle-hearted and sanguine as Mr. Gump, begs to differ: You have more control of the Web than you think. With a little work on your skills, you can find just about anything in very little time. But, why bother when there's the WebGuide. Collectively, the editorial staff of *IU* has about 90 years of research experience in one form or another. With this wisdom, we'll attempt to edify you. In return, we hope you'll share sightings of fantastic, interesting and even bizarre Web sites with us. The Web will never be the same once you've seen it through the eyes of the WebGuide. E-mail those sites to webguide@mcs.com

80 AMUSEMENTS
The great time-waster. If it's useless, fun and will threaten your sanity or employment status, you'll find it here.

79 ZINES
What to read after devouring *Internet Underground*

72 CATHOCELLULOID
A whirlwind tour of what's on the *other* screens.

73 CELEBRITIES
A visual, virtual gossip column.

78 BANDWIDTH
Your guide to getting the most out of the 'net.

77 TUNEAGE
Satisfy your aural fixation.

74 THE 3 R'S
Riotous, revealing and revivifying. And you may just learn a thing or two.

76 NEWSPRINT
All the news that's fit to download.

75 JOCKS
Sports: something you must abandon your computer to participate in.

ALIEN NATION
http://www.cms.dmu.ac.uk/~c2kd/tencton.html
"Theirs was a slave ship, carrying a quarter million beings bred to adapt and labour in any environment. And in the last five years, the Newcomers have become the latest addition to the population of Los Angeles..." George Francisco and the whole gang of "Newcomers" dwell on this Web site dedicated to the science-fiction television series *Alien Nation*. The site is mostly textual, with the exception of some GIFs that take entirely too long to load. Episode synopses, scripts that never made it to film and character descriptions will fill you in on what you may have missed when the show first aired
and what you can now see as in reruns on the Sci-Fi Channel. Numerous links.
Webmaster: Kev Davis
★★★

PEDRO ALMODOVAR
http://www.netpoint.be/abc/pedro/
Renowned director Pedro Almodovar, deemed the "King of Kitsch," by the creator of this Web site, is perhaps best known for his films *Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!*, *High Heels* and recently *The Flower of my Secret*. A brief biography of Almodovar from his early years as a comic writer and clerk at a telephone company in Madrid to his first film *Dos Putas, o Historia de Amor que Termina en Boda*, can be found here. The filmography page offers some information and an image or two from several of the films highlighted, but is largely just a list with the date each film was released.

Webmaster: Bruno Bollaert
★★★★

THE AVENGERS
http://nyquist.ee.ualberta.ca/~dawe/avengers.html

Enter agent John Steed and the woman who taught us how to wear (or look at) the cat-suit, Mrs. Emma Peel. This site is well-organized and loaded with images and information about the '60s English spy-action/adventure television series *The Avengers*. This unofficial site is a multimedia explosion. Where to find *Avengers* stuff in books, on TV, in film, magazines and more is detailed in length. Mailing lists and fan chat-rooms are also linkable here. "Mrs. Peel! We're needed!"
Webmaster: James Dawes
★★★★★

JIM CARREY, A TRIBUTE
http://www.en.com/users/bbulson/jim.html
Dedicated to the actor you either love or hate,

this site is filled with the usual content: pictures and sounds. If you want to look at Jim Carrey images or hear his slapstick one-liners such as, "Allll righty then" and "Smokin'!" until you can't stand any more, this is the site for you. The Carrey FAQ will answer some questions about the actor best known for his crazed facial expressions and animated dialect, but the novelty wears thin rather quickly. As best said by the actor himself, "Do *not* go in there."
Webmaster: Brian Bulson
★★

THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN
http://www.ozemail.com.au/~catman/pop/lostkid.html
The Jeunet and Caro production of *The City of Lost Children* is more stunning on the big screen than it is on the Web. However, the movie description here may help you sort through the surreal framework to better understand the film. This site is an offshoot from a larger film site with a brief synopsis of the story of Miette, One, Krank and the Clones and also minor background information on the production is here to boot. These features are useful tidbits, but considering the intensity of the movie's special effects, more graphics would have been greatly appreciated.
Webmaster: John Curtis
★★★

DREW'S SCRIPTS-O-RAMA
http://home.fish.net.au/~drew/scripts.htm
The word on the street is, "When I'm looking for something to steal, I go straight to Drew's Scripts-O-Rama." Drew's scripts come in two formats, the transcribed version, which someone slaved over with a recording device so you could read it on the Web and "script and drafts," which are copies of the original scripts from the studio where the production was made. Television and major movie scripts from *The Young Ones* to *The Godfather* and *Heathers* are available for download or read them online in their entirety. Don't miss the "fresh screenplays" page of up-and-coming screenwriters' works.
Webmaster: drew@pobox.com
★★★★★

FAMILY TIES
http://pmwww.cs.vu.nl/service/sitcoms/FamilyTies/
Besides the theme song sound bite and the noted family portrait GIF from the sitcom opening, this site contains little else. A list of networks broadcasting the '80s television show

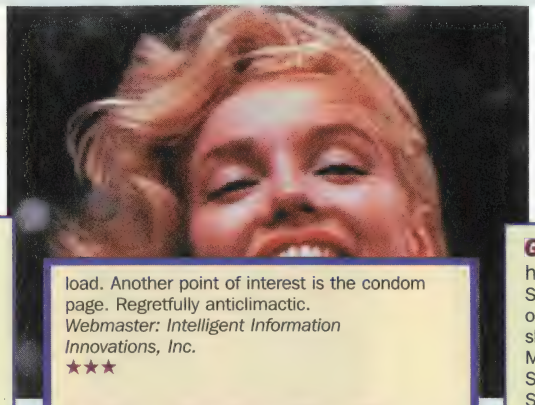
Family Ties, starring Michael J. Fox and Meredith Baxter, is included, but lacks references to affiliates' show times or call letters in the rare event that you might actually be interested in watching an episode or two. The most useful item at this textual site is the link to the rec.arts.tv newsgroup.
Webmaster: thijs@cs.vu.nl
★★

FILM SCOUTS
http://www.filmscouts.com/
Billed as the Web site "Scouting the Universe for the Best in Motion Pictures," Film Scouts is a virtual playground for movie fans in search of current reviews, interviews and up-to-date information about film festivals and movie premieres. The screening room offers older reviews from the film vault and frequently updated columns. A recent column offered an L.A. English course featuring phrases, such as, "Harvey's taking a look at it," which are guaranteed to enlighten you to the inner circle lingo of L.A. and teach you how to appropriately address the fact that you know no one and have sold nothing in Hollywood. Very well-designed, written and organized.
Webmaster: Mayra Langdon Riesman
★★★★★

HOLLYWOOD NETWORK
http://www.hollywoodnetwork.com
If you're not "connected" in Hollywood, you're nobody. The online Hollywood Interactive Studio is your "Dealmaking (one word) source." The best feature here is the categorical directory that you can browse and add your name to. Screenwriters, producers, production people, actors and actresses and individuals in just about any entertainment-related position will find this cornucopia of information useful. The advice comes in the form of books, stories of experience, tips from the "experts" and lists of contacts. Links to Hollywood chat lounges and FAQs are plenty. If this site doesn't help you, you are hopeless. Godspeed to stardom.
Webmaster: Hollywood Network
★★★★★

RANDOM MONTY PYTHON SKIT SERVER
http://ugweb.cs.ualberta.ca/~stuart/monty.cgi
"And now for something completely different!" Each time you access this site, you will receive, on-screen, a random *Monty Python* skit. Rest assured, you don't have to leave the site and come back 50 times to get to the skit you are hoping to find. A complete list of links to all of the *Monty Python* skits the Webmaster has transcribed and marked up can be found at the bottom of the home page. "Yes, but I came here for an argument!!" You won't get one from us. We loved this site. Textual.
Webmaster: David Stuart
★★★★★

WELCOME TO JOHN WOO CENTRAL
http://koganuts.com/Galleries/jw.main.html
This Web site is a visual tribute to John Woo, the director best known for creating intense action films such as *Once a Thief*, *Hard-Boiled* and *Broken Arrow*. These films and others are displayed in numerous movie stills with captions for each. Also displayed are movie posters and publicity shots. The images show classic fight scenes, gun stand-offs and other memorable moments from Woo's big-screen endeavors. A separate site by the same Webmaster exists for biographical information and movie synopses. All this Woo in one location is like *A Bullet in the Head*.
Webmaster: Jeff "Koganuts" Koga
★★★★



WOODY ALLEN

http://www.calvin.edu/~asmith39/woody.html

"Everything you wanted to know about Woody Allen" is an understatement. This site includes a filmography, complete with extensive sound bytes from each film listed, images, movie stills, favorite lines from books and films and much more. Links to the Allen FAQ, other sites and the newsgroup can be found here too. This is truly a site only an obsessive-compulsive could create. Amazingly thorough.

Webmaster: Anders Herman Torp

★★★★★

SHOKO ASAHARA

http://www.miyazakimic.ac.jp/students/class98/fyokoyam/E-4.html

If you want pictures of this guy, you'll have to go to another site. However, this site is the best collection of biographical information we could find on the man best known for the 1995 Serin gas attack in a Japanese subway. Asahara is the leader of the AUM Supreme Truth cult. Saying this is the best we could find does not mean much. The site is a single-paged, textual site that has huge gaps in information, like about 27 years' worth. For some reason, the site does not address Asahara's activities post-1992, those which landed him in jail. Hmm.

Webmaster: Unknown

★

MEL BROOKS

http://www.stud.his.no/~boerge/brook.htm

The actor, comedian and director has many tributes to him on the Web, but this site is the most complete and entertaining. Extensive highlights from Brooks' films, including audio bytes, reviews and movie stills make up a large amount of the content here. Brooks' career is immense. He is best known in the modern era for his roles in *Blazing Saddles*, *Spaceballs* and *History of the World, Part One*. The site is reflective of his many accomplishments.

Webmaster: Boerge Brunes

★★★★★

HEIDI FLEISS HOME PAGE

http://www.incubed.com/heidi/

Like walking into a bar and seeing a gorgeous man or woman, this site appears to be that desirable creature across the room. Once you decide to make a move and check it out, you quickly realize you aren't getting any further without some cash. This site is a brothel, merely a home for "Heidi Wear," a line of clothing bearing the infamous Hollywood Madame's name and logo. Some movie clips of models wearing, or not wearing, Heidi Wear items are available if you have the patience to wait for them to download. Another point of interest is the condom page. Regretfully anticlimactic.

Webmaster: Intelligent Information Innovations, Inc.

★★★

MARILYN MONROE WEB PAGE

http://www.netins.net/showcase/agency/marilyn.html

Looking at this Web site is as rewarding as watching some of Marilyn Monroe lesser films. You have high expectations that you'll see something more than just a pretty picture, but when all is said and done, you're left intellectually unfulfilled, basking in the glow of visual stimulation. A huge list of JPEGs and an opportunity to join the fan club mailing list is the extent of the amusement here. The images are great, ranging from Marilyn's early photos as Norma Jean Baker to images taken just before her death. However, this site is visual overdose and could use a shot of content.

Webmaster: Bill Liebbe

★★★★

GEORGE SELDES AND ANDREW KOPKIND

http://www.users.interport.net/~warpeace/Seldes.html

Honoring two great American journalists, this site is a tribute to the careers and lives of the late George Seldes and Andrew Kopkind. A short biography focusing on both men's career highlights ends in an inspirational tone by the Webmaster: "In the spirit of Kopkind and Seldes—two great American journalists not afraid to take a stand—let's continue that struggle." This site could use some great black-and-white photos of the two men as reporters in the 1950s or some examples of the journalists' work for further edification. Textual.

Webmaster: War and Peace Foundation

★★★

MIRA SORVINO

http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~sunhacha/mira.html

Best known for her Oscar-winning role as "Linda, the dirty-talking hooker with a heart of gold," from the film *Mighty Aphrodite*, this simple black-and-white site is a sidebar of a dedicated fan's larger home page. He includes a couple of images of the actress and links to biographies and reviews at other sites. The Webmaster hasn't done a lot of homework, aside from finding Sorvino sites for you, but he is a decent weather vane pointing to these other sources.

Webmaster: Art Sunhachawee

★★★

GERRY SPENCE HOME PAGE

http://worldmall.com/spence/

Spence is an attorney, and a darn successful one, so don't be surprised to find that this site is short on content and long on sales. Masquerading as a home page, the Gerry Spence Home Page is an advertisement for Spence's book "How to Argue and Win Every Time." However, the site is worthy of mention for the "Laws of arguing according to Gerry Spence" section. Tips such as "don't be blinded by brilliance" and "assault is not argument" will undoubtedly help you add an edge to your daily arguments. A large image of Gerry Spence adorns the site, but it's only a picture of the book cover.

Webmaster: World Mall

★★

JEFF SPICOLI

http://turtle.ncsa.uiuc.edu/spicoli/

"Jeff Spicoli wears Vans, dreams about surfing and smokes a lot of weed." We all, in one way or another, relate to Jeff Spicoli. Spicoli was the

surf-boy from the infamous '80s flick *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. This site is filled with gratuitous sound bytes and video clips from the movie so you can fill your head with useless lines such as, "All I need are some tasty waves, a cool buzz and I'm fine."

Webmasters: Chris Trimble, Alan Braverman

★★★★

HOWARD STERN

http://www.netusa.net/~drchuck/hs-long.txt

This textual site is not as colorful as the controversial talk-radio host Howard Stern's on-air commentaries may be. But if you're a fan, you will find it very useful. This site lists radio stations nationwide that air the Stern show, complete with show times, positions on the radio dial and telephone numbers to call in with protests or accolades. Also included here is the Stern fan club address and a tidbits about Stern being an online junkie using Prodigy. Don't get excited, his e-mail address is not listed here. The site is frequently updated with changes.

Webmaster: Chuck

★★★★

LILI TAYLOR HOME PAGE

http://www.iag.net/~alladin/taylor.html

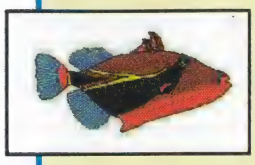
Beware. This site is brutally slow at 28.8, so anything less would probably be unbearable, depending on the length of your attention span. Lili Taylor, most recently seen as Valerie Solanas in *I Shot Andy Warhol*, has appeared in a slew of films such as *Rudy*, *Short Cuts* and *Say Anything*. This site is an image gallery with rows and columns of Taylor movie stills ad nauseam. You won't actually learn anything about the actress here; it's all fluff. A bit of biographical information would be helpful. Links to several '80s women Web sites are included.

Webmaster: alladin@iag.net

★

THE ANIMAL ALPHABET

http://www.maui.com/~twright/animals2/alphabet.htm



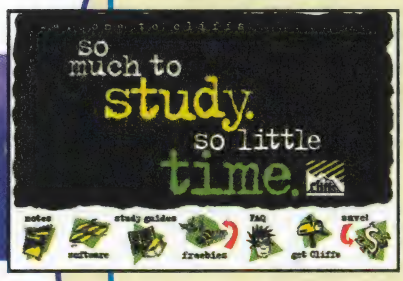
Humuhumu nukunuku apua'a? If you didn't know that this is the state fish of Hawaii, this site may be more useful to you than you think. The Animal Alphabet Page is part of a larger book site dedicated to critters. The Animal Alphabet is a simple list of links to pages that represent each letter of the alphabet and an animal name that starts with that letter. From squirrels and elephants to xuprocars and narwhals, this site not only gives you an image of the animal, it also teaches you about its habitat, lifestyle and more. The site is simple and straightforward.

Webmaster: Mark Andrews

★★★★★

CLIFFS NOTES

http://www.cliffs.com/cliffs/cliffs.html



"So much to study, so little time." From the company that made school tolerable and studying the night before the test realistic, The Cliffs Notes Home Page may be a commercial site, but we figured the kids would appreciate it just the same. A complete listing of Cliffs Notes publications can be found by author and title, with samples of some content online. An FAQ and the opportunity to get a free screensaver can be found here as well. You can't order on the site; however, a toll-free telephone number and an order form are available online for you to expedite the purchasing process.

Webmaster: Cliffs Notes, Inc.

★★★★

ADDENDUM: ODE TO CLIFFS NOTES

http://w3.gti.net/dpalermo/whacks/ww-730.html

"Buying Cliffs Notes is kinda like buying condoms. You don't waste time in grabbing what you need. You feel inclined to buy a magazine to draw attention away from the Cliffs Notes. The cashier always gives you a dirty look." This site is a textual tribute from a student who chooses to write books, not read books, and finds studying-salvation in Cliffs Notes. The site is quite entertaining.

Webmaster: Feff

★★★★

CYBERSCURRO

http://WWW.ERC.MsState.Edu/~mott/

A source for fantastic computer graphics and electronic design. The Webmaster's work reflects his "interests in history, mythology/comparative religion, folklore, symbolism,

science and pseudoscience." The site contains samples of his work, mostly published interviews with the artist and a link to his work as presented at the online gallery, The Terraformers Guild. The site takes a while to load, but the images are amazing and worth the wait.

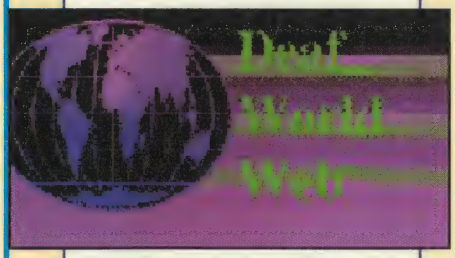
Webmaster: Wm. Michael Mott

★★★★

DEAF WORLD WEB

http://deafworldweb.org/deafworld/

Resources for deaf individuals around the world are available through the Deaf World Web. A newsletter, chat room and reference directory listed by country are some features that make this a great place for connecting with others in search of Web contacts and groups to participate in. Choose a country by selecting a link and you can search your geographical region for any organization or group dedicated to the deaf in your area. The site is mostly textual, containing many links. The discussion forum and the



Deaf CyberKids page, including "key-pals" links and a guide to the Internet for deaf children, are highlights.

Webmaster: Jolanta Lapiak

★★★★★

DON TIBBITS' PHOTOGRAPHY HOME PAGE

http://www.goodnet.com/~tibbits/

Don Tibbits is to photography what Julia Child is to cooking. His home page is a photography collective,

with image samples, magazines and photography publications listings, organizations, photographers, agencies and more. The glossary is the gold mine here. Links to articles, guides, tips and tutorials are endless and complement the information supplied by the Webmaster. A listing of workshops and photography classes offered nationwide is included. Considering the amount of information available here, the site is well-organized, and uses frames to keep the index of information always accessible on the sides of your screen.

Webmaster: Don Tibbits

★★★★★

MUSHROOM HEAVEN

http://www.aa.net/~reo/mushroom.html

Is this Webmaster stable? What kind of line is "I am mystified by those who find no interest or romance in these wonderful fruiting bodies." Admittedly, mushrooms are great, but romantic? Mushroom Heaven is a site dedicated to the "wonderful fruiting bodies," commonly referred to as fungus. You can learn everything about 'shrooms from hallucinating on them to identifying and cooking them. Aside from the massive amount of information here, we were most impressed with the passion the Webmaster showed for his subject: "I want to shout at those who kick mushrooms to pieces..."

Webmaster: reo@aa.net

★★★★

THE NATIONAL POLITICAL INDEX

http://www.politicalindex.com

The National Political Index was created and is maintained by Americans Who Work for a Living (AWWL), a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization. The purpose of this site is to link and coordinate political activists, federal, state and local government agencies and just about any type of political body or organization in existence. Anyone interested in staying abreast of government can check out hourly political news updates online. Political candidates can find free Web site services, political magazines and political science departments. If you need a job, check out the national employment listings. This site is mostly textual and contains boundless bits of information. Definitely a bookmark candidate.

Webmaster: Denis L. Hemmerle

★★★★★

NOODLE'S PANIC ANXIETY PAGE

http://frank.mtsu.edu/%7Esward/anxiety/master.html

Can you imagine how traumatic it would be if this site took a long time to load? Thankfully, it doesn't. Noodle's Panic Anxiety Page can help you get a grip on your anxiety and begin to sort through your condition by reading various articles, discussion groups, advice columns, medical information and relaxation techniques. Links to support groups and a page for you to share your stories and experiences is included in this textual cybersupport group.

Webmaster: Noodles

★★★★★

THE UNOFFICIAL ANDRE AGASSI WEB SITE

http://www.ids.net/%7Ematttg/agassi/agassi.html

With boldface promise of up-to-the-minute news, this unofficial fan site claims to be "The one and only Web site" dedicated to tennis' nouveau bad-boy Andre Agassi. This site contains video files, GIFs, sound bites and frequently updated rankings so you can follow the player's success and failure on the court. Links to major tennis and sports sources will serve you the information you can't find here. The site is attractively designed.

Webmaster: Matt Giraitis

★★★★

DOGSLED RACING

http://www.nfcs.tbci.org/~davids/links.html

The Ididarod may never be as popular as the Superbowl; however, it is referred to as "the last great race on earth," and has a Web site just the same. The Ididarod is a 1,049 mile yearly dogsled race through Alaska that lasts two to three weeks. This site contains a brief history of the race and multiple links to dogsled race associations, including a full textual site of Ididarod information as published by middle-school students.

Webmaster:

★★★

NORTH AMERICAN STONE-SKIPPING ASSOCIATION

http://www.ccsl.com/yeeha/nassa/a1.html

The North American Stone Skipping Association (NASSA) was created by Jerdon a.k.a. "Stone Dancer," the Guinness World Record holder for skipping stones from 1988 through 1996. NASSA formed in 1989 to organize and oversee stone-skipping contests and offer a structured group for participants of the sport. The site includes a photo album of video stills, a stone-skipping trivia page with facts such as in France, the sport is called "ricochet," and complete details on how to join the organization and go for the world record yourself. Be forewarned. The record held by the Webmaster is a whopping 38 skips on the Blanco River. A huge list of "cool sites" is available, but if you don't like swimming through random links, we suggest you skip it.

Webmaster: Jerdon, a.k.a. "Stone Dancer"

★★★★★

PAINTBALL

http://www.warpig.com

Deemed the "First and largest paintball Web site," Warpig supplies all the information you could possibly want, whether you are a paintball novice or seasoned expert. Rules, regs and tips on how to play are not all you'll find. You can browse selections of paintball gear, images of people playing the sport, articles and tournament and contest information. The site is well-designed and maintained, offering useful up-to-date content.

Webmaster: pig@warpig.com

★★★★

PAT'S BOXING PAGE

http://www.webcom.com/mrmodem/boxing.html

"Let's get ready to rumble" Webmaster Pat's home page is a consortium of information consisting of links to boxing resources and the newsgroup rec.sport.boxing. From ESPN's SportsZone to Fight TV, this site will connect you with the Webbed sources you'll need to stay in the fight. This site is mostly textual, with the exception of the boxing mitts wallpaper and a link to boxing photos from the '80s. Pat's page is no Rocky Balboa. It's more like a lesser-known welterweight in that it has hope, but it needs to tone up and run more flights of stairs to really be a contender.

Webmaster: Pat Mulcahy

★★★

SPORTS HUMOR

http://lila.dei.uc.pt/~pedro/jokes/sports.jok

This canonical list of sports humor is a long, textual pathway. Sports humor of activities from skydiving to hockey and golf can be found in the form of riddles, jokes, humorous facts and News of the Weird, one-liners and famous comedic skits such as "Who's on first" in its entirety. Some of the material here is really lame, but the good stuff makes the site worthwhile. It could use an update or two as well. "If at first you don't succeed, don't skydive."

Webmaster: hjiwa@nor.chevron.com

★★

PÉTANQUE USA

http://www.esnet.com/~sirrah/www/epetmain.html

Let the Brits have their lawn bowling and the Italians can keep their bocce ball. Discover the French game of Pétanque, billed as the "most aggressive" of the games in which you pitch a heavy ball along the ground so as to arrive closer to a target than your opponent genre. This site gives you all the basics if you want to take up the sport including where to buy equipment and a national listing of clubs and tournaments.

Webmaster: Beach Media

★★★★

BRAZIL, THE LAND OF FOOTBALL

http://www.proweb.com/mprais/futebol/brasil/futbr_english.html

So I gets to this site here, and there's nuthin' about football, just a bunch of soccer information...Sorry about that folks, my cousin Pete was playing around with my computer again. Any half-wit knows that just as maize and corn mean the same thing to different cultures, so do football and soccer. No one takes there football more seriously than the Brazilians and this site reflects that passion with links to World Cup glories past and future, plus GIFs, links to clubs, and even Pele's farewell message. Gooooooooal!

Webmaster: Claudio Ruggieri

★★★★★

AROUND AUSTRALIA

http://www.ace.net.au/cgrant/index.htm

This month, the 21st to be exact, Aussie Chris Grant will attempt to break a world record by cycling around the land of Down Under in 40 days. Grant's not only trying to break a record, he's raising money for cancer research to boot. During the ride, Grant promises to check in with daily logs, but cut him some slack if he misses a day or two—to break the

record Grant needs to pedal 354.25 km a day. A fascinating site.

Webmaster: Chris Grant

★★★★★

THE BOYCOTT MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL HOME PAGE

http://www.cybergate.com/~morris/

Morris is pissed off, still. Most baseball fans may have finally healed the psychic scars of the last strike, which canceled the World Series for the first time, but not Morris. He loves baseball, the sport, but hates Major League Baseball. If you're like Morris, well, he's come up with an alternative to MLB, which while it isn't a secret on the level of the identity of Keyser Soze, we're not going to give it away here.

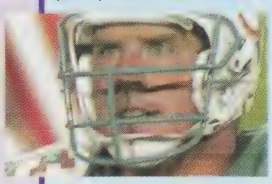
Webmaster: morris@cybergate.com

★★★★

DAN MARINO CENTRAL

http://www.personal.umich.edu/~vittozc/marino/marino.htm

While Troy Aikman, and Joe Montana before him, have been running out of fingers for Super Bowl rings, the best pure passer of the last two decades, and some would say all time, has been denied the glory of winning the big game. With proven winner Jimmy Johnson replacing the legendary Don Shula at the helm, this may be Marino's year. That said, this fan site is rather dull, mostly containing stats and photos. Fitting for perhaps a quarterback of Bobby Herbert's stature, but not Dolphin Dan.



Webmaster: Michael Misuraca

★★

COMBUSTIBLE EDISON

http://shiva.subpop.com/bands/combustible/oldhtml/

This site is a reminder of how we should ignore the bad things to see the good. The Combustible Edison site is a Sub Pop creation dedicated to the band responsible for the *Four Rooms* soundtrack. The site has loads of information and some really great photos, but it hasn't been updated in eons (In Webspeak, that means months! Egads!). You can find out about your fave CE performer such as Miss Lily Banquette, the Millionaire and so on. The discography contains some WAV files, but is mostly textual. Don't expect to learn much from the concert schedule, as it hasn't been updated since November of '95. Stop snoozing, guys. You're site is cool, but not THAT cool.

Webmaster: comed@subpop.com

★★

CRASH WORSHIP

http://www.tyrell.net/%7Ecoventry/c_art/art11.html

Graphics from Crash Worship album covers are great to look at, but more band information and less eye candy would make this site much better. The band known for concerts that are more like audience participation and performance art and music more like "religious" experiences, has a stash of images, disturbing and funny. The site is attractive and the images are well-compressed. However, you may feel like you're lost in a dark tunnel at times. It's not the easiest site to get around because you proceed through the image files by clicking the "Next" button, not knowing exactly where you are going. We'll be your flashlight and tell you that you simply jump from image to image until there are no more.

Webmaster: coventry@tyrell.net

★★★

GRASS RECORDS

http://www.grassrecords.com

Grass Records' Web site highlights the label's bands with up-to-date band info, tour dates and album releases. Bands such as Loomis, Hippopotamus, Liquor Bike and others are featured. The best pages here are the sound samplers of each band. You can download and play sound byte selections to get a feel for the type of music Grass sponsors. The site is well-structured and maintained.

Webmaster: GRASS@cbcmedia.com

★★★★★

GROOVE CENTRAL, DJAZE OLD SCHOOL GLOBAL GROOVE

http://www.crown.net/~djaze/djframes.htm

Do you feel the funk? Groove Central has "Parliafunkadelicment Type Thangs" from album and concert reviews to funky images and the motherpage, where you'll find lyrics, a bibliography and an FAQ dedicated to funk. A huge textual list of sampled music is an interesting read, but it doesn't make up for the fact that this site is like a roach motel. The way it's constructed, once you go into a page, you can't get out. You're not given return buttons or any means to easily hop from page to page. Since the site has a lot of unique content, including the blaxploitation movie and song page, "funk is its own reward!" And we can overlook the navigation difficulties.

Webmaster: DJaze

★★★★★

GROUPIES HOME PAGE

http://www.echonyc.com/~cleo/groupie.html

Beavis and Butt-head would be surprised to find that this site does not live up to what could potentially be—the title promises lots of skin and leather. The Groupies Home Page does little else than offer three e-mail addresses and a link to a home page belonging to a gorgeous groupie who models, writes books (and gets published too!) and has her own television show in Manhattan. Go backstage to La Floppy Disco to see what this site is all about. If you happen to be a groupie, you can submit your name and e-mail address or URL to be placed on the list of groupies. You may be shot down though, due to quality control. The groupies profess that "We are gourmets with only the finest on our menus."

Webmaster: info@sensemedia.net

★★★

IPECAC LOOP

http://members.aol.com/IpecacLoop/private/IpecacLoop.html

Ipecac is a "moody, eclectic and heavily electronic instrumental music project." The Web site is dedicated to promoting the band in the form of reviews, current releases, interviews and song sound bites from the latest as well as every previous album. The site is easy to navigate and comprehensive with links to record labels, miscellaneous stuff and other bands' home pages. The only feature missing here is a picture or two of the band. We hate to leave a site thinking, "What do these guys look like anyway?"

Webmaster: Cameron Lewis

★★★★

JACK DIAMOND'S HOUSE OF GAMES

http://www.cygnus.com/misc/kfjc/diamond

Jack Diamond is a radio show host in Los Altos Hills at station KFJC 89.7 FM and has been collecting albums and tapes for years. His site presents album covers, interviews, discography and links to other sites the Webmaster considers "cool." This site is simple and easy to work your way around and the information is unique and insightful, due to the Webmaster's extensive background in collecting. "Record collecting is no mere hobby, no leisurely innocuous diversion. Record collecting is a feverish passion, bordering on dementia, driving those under its influence to irrational, compulsive and sometimes fanatical extremes." This site is not extreme, but it is very cool.

Webmaster: KFJC

★★★★★

MUCOMO! RADIO

http://www.mucomo.com/radio/

MuCoMo Radio is the site for "live interactive Webwaves." This site features live concerts via Internet using RealAudio. You can also check out CDs, enter the chat room, view images and read interviews of the bands currently featured online here. Past performances are available anytime, however you will need RealAudio and, at least, a 28.8 b.p.s. modem to enjoy the content here.

Webmaster: Webmaster@mucomo.com

★★★★★

POE

http://www.asia-online.com/bigo/jan96/janpoe.html

We expected to find more of a tome considering the subject of this site, singer Poe, best known for the songs "Angry Johnny" and "Trigger Happy Jack," is a 'net and computer chick. This Web page has nothing more than a biography and an interview from *BigO* magazine, but is the most complete Poe tribute we found. The page has one image of the songster diva, who played in a band while attending Princeton University, and an interview that reveals Poe's inspiration and motivation in writing and making music. Of note, Poe wrote a song titled, "Hello," which includes the lines, "M.O.D. are you out there? I can't see your face/But you left a trace on a data back-road that I almost erased." If you can't figure out what that's about, what are you doing on the 'net to begin with?

Webmaster: BigO

★★★

ROCKTROPOLIS

http://www.rocktropolis.com

What on earth is Rocktropolis? It is best described as, "A rock 'n' roll fantasy theme park." You can read features and information from 'zines such as *Ozone* and *InSpite* and jump into the "Confessional," the page where you can confess and be forgiven within seconds. Links to the I.R.S. Records' RealAudio jukebox and to indy artist and band sites such as Soundgarden and Sky Cries Mary can be found at this musical grab bag of a site. This site has a little bit of everything, sometimes blurring the lines between music and entertainment in general. The graphics are very cool.

Webmaster: Rocktropolis Interactive

★★★★★

THE UNOFFICIAL SOUL COUGHING FAN PAGE

http://members.aol.com/soulcghfan/index.html

We're going to reject the adjectives used by the mainstream to describe this band and steal from the site instead. The Webmaster refers to Soul Coughing as "A slamming live band. Funk-hard drum beats and fluid acoustic-bass lines meshing together in fat, gritty grooves." That works for us. On this site, you'll find tour information, discography, links to band info and a very unusual but highly appreciated unique page dedicated to guitar tabs for the songs on the album *Ruby Vroom*. The site is everything you'd expect from a band named from lead vocalist Michael Doughty's poem about Neil Young vomiting in the back of a bus. It doesn't take a "Supra Genius" to recognize a good site when you see one. All the better considering the Webmaster is only 14-years-old.

Webmaster: Noah Benjamin Ben Aram Ethan Ythan Burstein

★★★★★

THE DAILY NEWS COLLAGE

http://www.rhythm.com/~prash/inc/inc.shtml/web.shtml

The fact that so much different stuff can all be somehow connected makes a collage very cool. The Daily News Collage is a site that presents daily world and national news from many different sources by linking to online news services such as Reuters, NandO, Telegraph, CNN, USA Today, ESPNet and other media agencies. The comic section is not daily. However, the business, technology, national, international and tabloid news sections are always fresh off the press because the site links directly to the sources' home page. Mostly links and text.

Webmaster: inc@rhythm.com

★★★★

FUNGUS

http://www.mtjeff.com/fungi/

Fungus is a weekly e-mail newsletter dedicated to mushrooms. The information here is primarily for growers and in most cases is fairly technical, so you won't find many first-person hallucinating experience stories here. The Web site for the newsletter is textual, with links to gopher files of archived issues dating back to December, 1994. The fungi archives database allows you to quickly find specific information in any of the past issues by simple keyword search. Links to many other mushroom resources on the Web are available as well.

Webmaster: Ralph D. Arnold

★★★★

FUTURENET WORLD NEWS

http://www.futurenet.co.uk/cgipasswd/passwd_login.pl/News/today/

Once you register for free access to the popular United Kingdom news site, you can read international and European news gathered from wire services and news agencies worldwide. The sports section is impressive. It is a great source for highlights of rugby, cricket and other sports generally ignored or underreported in the United States. The number of news features available within a particular section is noted in parentheses next to the link so you can determine how much information is available before you use the link. Every half-hour, stock prices are updated and back issues are available online for several days.

Webmaster: FutureNet

★★★★

ELECTRONIC MAIL AND GUARDIAN HOME PAGE

http://www.mg.co.za/mg/

EM&G is the electronic version of the weekly independent South African newspaper *Mail & Guardian* and was the first South African newspaper to be available on the Internet in 1994. The publication has since grown to include other services such as discussion groups, archived issues and various new news categories. EM&G includes world and national news, with sports, business and entertainment features daily.

Registration is required for archived issues, but they are free once you comply. The site also includes "Webfeet," a weekly Internet column. Updated every afternoon, Monday through Friday.

Webmaster: Irwin Manoim

★★★★★

MUSIC NEWS OF THE WORLD

http://www.addict.com/Music_News_Of_The_World/

Music news may not be as charming without Kurt Loder and Tabatha Soren gazing at you from behind the MTV news desk. However, the Music News of the World home page is just as comprehensive and entertaining. This site is a branch of the well-known *Addicted to Noise* 'zine. News items are updated daily and contain information about tours, record sales, contracts, gossip, new releases and more. Some images are available with news features. News dating back to December, 1994, is archived and available onsite.

Webmaster: Addicted to Noise

★★★★★

TEKNO COMICS

http://www.scifi.com/pulp/teknation/tnation.htm

The Tekno Comics site may not be "news" in the traditional sense of the word, but to some people, the comics section is the first part of the newspaper they read. This site contains online comic strips displayed periodically, just like having to wait to see them each week in the newspaper. Comics such as Mickey Spillane's *Mike Danger*, *Neuro Jack*, Issak Asimov's *Ibots* and *The Big Bang* can all be found on this Big Entertainment, Inc. site that is a part of the Sci-Fi Channel's home page. The updates are frequent and the site is well-designed and quick loading, even with the numerous graphics.

Webmaster: bige_fm@msn.com

★★★★★

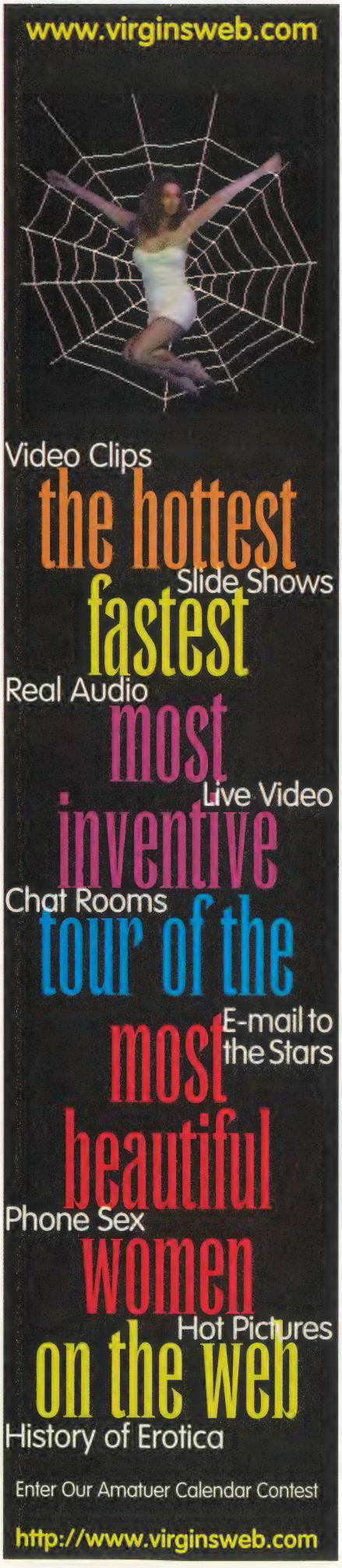
VIRTUAL DAILY NEWS

http://www.infi.net/~opfer/daily.htm

Most major news services on the Internet that are free to access can be linked to through the Virtual Daily News site. From networks such as NBC, CBS and CNN to print giants such as *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *USA Today*, you can find up-to-date news directly from the source. This site is really useful if you are new to the Web and don't know where to go to find news updates and major information and media sources. Several of the main search engines are also included on this site. This is one-stop shopping for 'net newbies.

Webmaster: Steve Opfer

★★★★★



AMIRACLE ONLINE

http://members.aol.com/amolmag/contents.html

You don't have to be a genius to figure out what this 'zine parodies. Amiracle Online is a writer/artist collective, humorously styled after America Online that features stories of personal computer experiences, random thoughts and articles about life in general. The features are light and entertaining, with a strong sense of experimentation. These guys are ripe to try anything, so send story ideas. Images are included to complement stories and links to sites ranging from the practical to the peculiar are a bonus.

Webmaster: amol@aol.com

★★★★

BLEAK OF THE WEEK

http://www.inch.com/~beat1/bleak.html

The good thing about searching for raw mediocrity on the Internet is that there's no danger of running out of material. The Bleak Webmaster snags discouraging content from the Web and highlights it on his site. What is considered "bleak" at this site can be anything from gloom to something totally mundane. You'll find sound bytes, articles, images of random stuff and the Webmaster's collages, created from portions of Web sites he's found. The content is entertaining and innovative. If you like parody and have a sense of humor, you'll like this site.

Webmaster: Keith Johnson

★★★★

THE CRASHSITE

http://www.crashsite.com/crash/

"Where chaos, horsepower and madness unite." The Crashsite has more going on than any sane person can deal with in one dose. But because it's fluid and the content is cohesive, we dug it. For us to list all the features on this site would not do it justice. You need to check out the high or low bandwidth version of Crashsite to get the total experience. Charles Bukowski and J.G. Ballard are the muses of this art, poetry, music and story collective. Updates are frequent, even if somewhat unpredictable. You can watch the Webmasters at work via CU-SeeMe and the Big Gun Project SpyCam.

Webmaster: Big Gun Project

★★★★★

GEORGE

http://www.georgemag.com/

This monthly newsstand magazine, published by John F. Kennedy, Jr., attempts to make politics hip and reglamorize what was already pretty glam to begin with. Now you can find it online. *George* offers features, games and polls, a scant number of links to political sites and *George* sponsors and a forum to read and post your responses to the publication. The only thing missing is the stash of 60,000 ads found in each newsstand issue. Technically, the site is well-structured and aesthetically pleasing. Just like its publisher.

Webmaster: webmaster@georgemag.com

★★★★

MR. MEDIA

http://www.mrmedia.com/mrmedia/

Mr. Media, Bob Andelman, created something everyone has thought about at one time or another: a 'zine that sifts through all the information that is thrown at us daily, compiling it into one tidy weekly publication. You must trust Mr. Media to select information that is relevant to you based on his years in the newspaper and publishing business. You can receive a free subscription of Mr. Media each week via e-mail or check it out online for the full, visual thrill that it is. Archived articles from 1994 to present are available as well. This is a must-see if you want to be in the know.

Webmaster: David Rettig

★★★★★

THE NEW YORKER

http://www.enews.com/magazines/new_yorker/

The real joy of this weekly newsstand publication is that it offers unlimited entertainment while commuting, waiting for a Shockwave file to load, procrastinating or lying in bed. The online version of the magazine recognized for excellent writing, astute commentary and outstanding cartoons is featured in part, on the Web, with just enough of a sampling to whet your appetite. Much like the paper version, the site does not have any images besides the cover photo. Also disappointing is the absence of any cartoons on the site. It can't be that much to ask for one complimentary cartoon per issue, can it?

Webmaster: The New Yorker

★★★

OBLIVION

http://www.olywa.net/oblivion/index.html

Oblivion is a quarterly 'zine created by students at Olympia High School in Washington. The 'zine is created by people who happen to attend this learning establishment, but don't adhere to its rules. That's the buzz at Olympia High, and likewise the reason for the popularity of the 'zine. The hard copy version of this gem was banned across campus. The features are the work of a collective of young writers and artists who want to create a stir. We extracted some content for you. Here goes... "Having no discipline in a social setting is just wonderful ...To feel the masses crumble." Perhaps a better example is "...I could also stop plotting to kill people." They're getting better, teach'. Lighten up.

Webmaster: Oblivion

★★★★

PARISIENNE

http://www.mcs.com/~parisi/

"The journal of luxury motoring life." Eh? It took us a second to figure out what that was supposed to mean. Could this be a 'zine dedicated to the Parisienne automobile and the lifestyles of those who own the luxury vehicle? It is. Parisienne is a charmingly swank 'zine that doesn't conform to a production schedule so you will never really know when to expect updates. It coasts on cruise-control. The articles about driving and living the "life of Reilly" are well-composed and informative to those of us who drive anything less than a land shark. Lots of images.

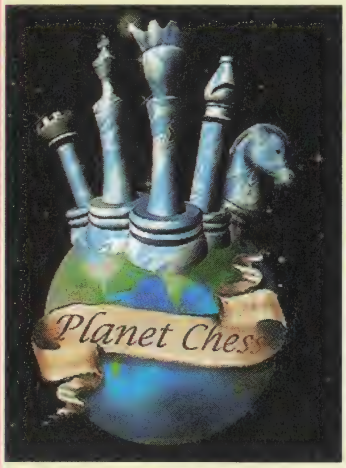
Webmaster: parisi@mcs.com

★★★★

PLANET CHESS

http://www.planetchess.com/

When not playing chess, these gamesters publish this monthly e-zine titled Planet Chess. You can view famous matches step-by-step. Why not learn from the pros? You don't have to be an expert to enjoy this site, however. If you are learning chess or haven't played before, this site includes instruction and tips on how to improve your game. Planet Chess also links to chess sites all over the Web. This site mates utility and aesthetics, check it out.



Webmaster: chess@planetchess.com

★★★★★

XANDER STORIES

http://www.users.interport.net/~xmel/

Xander Stories is a monthly short story and cartoon 'zine dedicated to tales about young people living in New York City. The creator, Xander Mellish, is a story writer who wanted to make her stories accessible to everyone, so she started posting stories, like flyers, all around New York City. She put her telephone number on the posters to encourage people to call her to hear the rest of the story. When poster-placing became difficult in NYC, due to the mayoral change of hands, she began using the Internet to continue offering her stories publicly. The stories are engrossing, with a wide range of themes.

Webmaster: Xander Mellish

★★★★

YUSH PONLINE

http://www.ftech.net/~yush/

When you find a site that captures your attention at 4 a.m., it's a keeper. This urban 'zine from the U.K. is a hip, ultra-cool cultural trip through music, fashion, pop culture, art, society and politics. The 'zine is a monthly online publication that features about 150 pages of content that can't be absorbed in one sitting. The contributing writers come from largely differing backgrounds, centered on the arts, music, technology and culture, with a strong focus on reggae music. The features are immensely entertaining and well-written. The site is as visually strong as it is conceptually lucid. Set some time aside to read this one each month. It'll be well worth it.

Webmaster: yush@dircon.co.uk

★★★★★

COMPUTER SONGS AND POEMS

http://www.powerup.com.au/~chenness/jokes/compsong.htm

"When I heard about the system crash
And all the passwords got rehashed
The Day That UNIX Died...
And I was singing:
Bye, bye, nroff, rogue and vi
Gave my program to Phil Levy but Phil Levy was high,
The boys on the board were sayin' 'kill this, goodbye.'
Singin' this'll be the day that I die..."

The only way to maintain your sanity when you spend most of your life online is to be able to laugh. Fortunately, there is no shortage of computer humor on the Web. This site is yet another tribute to high-tech buffoonery. Completely textual and mildly funny.

Webmaster: Chris Hennessy

★★★

IRC SOURCES ON THE INTERNET

http://urth.acsu.buffalo.edu/irc/WWW/ircdocs.html

This site is a textual cybertutor of Internet Relay Chat, or IRC. Advice on how to use IRC, lists of known servers in the United States and Europe, games, help and links to other IRC sources can be found here. The IRC FAQ is available in HTML and ASCII. Also available are numerous reference materials, articles about the sociology and psychology of IRC, IRC channels with Web pages and pictures of IRC users. This resource is the IRC bible. Worship regularly if you want to reap the benefits of IRC.

Webmaster: pjg@acsu.buffalo.edu

★★★★★

JAVA TOOLS

http://www.sbktech.org/index.html

Actually, this site is titled "Free Tools for Java," which increases its rating immensely. The site is a textual supermarket for Java programming tools. As stated by the Webmaster, "Unless specifically stated otherwise, you can freely use, rip apart, modify or sell all the source code here, and use, include, refer to or giggle at all the documentation I've provided." Eureka! So, in conclusion, at this site you get free stuff to use and abuse and can make fun of the content guilt-free. If the Webmaster hasn't done enough to win us already, his last link is to other free Java resources on the 'net.

Webmaster: kbs@sbktech.org

★★★★★

UNDERGROUND PROPAGANDA

http://www.L5.com/daddict/cu/

"Truth in the guise of deception." Underground Propaganda is a site dedicated to the future of free speech, weeding through mediaspeak and philosophical issues dealing with the direction the Internet, and technology in general, is heading. The "Computer Underground" page contains a section of links to articles such as "In defense of piracy" and other sources on the Web including hacker merchandise (T-shirts, not blue boxes, sorry guys) and features about the abuse of privacy laws and so forth. How does the Webmaster feel about the future? "We are slowly being sucked into a surrealistic science-fiction novel."

Webmaster: daddict@15.com

★★★★★

VIRUSES@WPI: ONLINE REFERENCES

http://ccc-shop.wpi.edu/virus/sources.htm

Enter the hot zone. This site is your computer immunity booster. Loads of links to online computer virus resources from the Virus Bulletin Home Page to the AntiVirus Research Center site and many others will help you sort out what you should really worry about and what's just a rumor. Beyond making you scared, this site will also educate you so you will know what to do if you catch a cyberbug. The best advice you can find here is in the form of preventative medicine. A bibliography, white pages, FAQ and even a joke page can all be found here. Frequently updated and easy to navigate.

Webmaster: jski@wpi.edu

★★★★★

LIVE·LIVE·LIVE

The internet's premiere adult playground. Watch LIVE strip shows. Interact with TOP adult stars in our erotic LIVE Fantasy Booths. Access first-run or fetish films, interactive photo features, magazines, chat rooms, the Net's largest adult mega mall & much more.

C·L·U·B·L·O·V·E

ADULT PLAYGROUND

The interactive passion playground that's always open...for ADULTS ONLY!

http://www.adultplayground.com/iu

BSY'S LIST OF INTERNET ACCESSIBLE COKE MACHINES

http://www.cse.ucsd.edu/users/bsy/coke.html

It's nearly impossible to go through the day without seeing at least one beverage vending machine, no matter where you live. So why is it fascinating to see Coke machines online?

Because we can. This site links to cameras on Coke machines around the world. You can interact with Lloyd's Coke machine at Caltech by posting messages to an LCD display via your computer. This machine is networked to the server. Also of interest is the soda machine in downtown Atlanta. In honor of the summer Olympics, this machine displays a computer-generated image of a soda can bob-sledding to the place where the actual can is released. While this site may not be the real thing, it's as close as you can get without being there.

Webmaster: bsy

★★★★★

BUZBEE BAT HOUSE TEMPERATURE PLOT

http://www.nyx.net/~jbuzbee/bat_house.html

Webmaster Jim Buzbee of Colorado created this Web site to share his experiences in the bat-wrangling profession. Buzbee's contribution to the Web is a chart that tracks a five-day temperature within the bat house he constructed. The

Webmaster did not own any bats before he built the house and as his site mentions, he hasn't attracted any yet. But he is getting the temperature theory down to a science. Numerous links to other bat sites are included. The temperature gauge is one thing, but wait until you see the poetry, articles, images and bat jokes this site connects you with. You'd have to lock yourself up in a cave to be able to consume all of this data.

Webmaster: Jim Buzbee

★★★★★

CONNECT FOUR

http://csugrad.cs.vt.edu/htbin/Connect4.perl

This site is not a fresh face on the Web, but classic entertainment is timeless, right? Based on the "board game" by the same name, this electronic version of Connect Four can be played against the server by clicking on the space you wish to place your "chip" on alternating turns. The goal is to be the first to string four chips in a row to. Making the high score list is your only incentive here. You can choose to play the game with or without graphics.

Webmasters: Joe Hines, Brian Roder

★★★★

DADA SERVER

http://sp1.berkeley.edu/dada.html

It can't be a coincidence that both DADA and surrealism are so popular on the Web. This DADA site asks you to enter your birth date and name to receive a random list of DADAesque relationships to what you input. For example, if you comply, you will find out your secret name (ours was dirt), the animal which symbolizes you (ours was Stanley Matthews), your special pain or illness (ours was Marlon Brando) and the shape of your life (ours was mid-afternoon). Assuming you actually carry out this task and submit your name and birthday, we can guess your "special pain or illness" without waiting for a reply from this server.

Webmaster: Juliette, resident DADA oracle

★★★

FAKE OUT! THE DEFINITION GUESSING GAME

http://www.hmco.com:80/hmco/school/dictionary/

Do you know a funambulist from a silviculture? What about a bunyip from a chickaree? The "Fake Out!" site is an educational Web page that allows you to match a given term to the correct definition. The incentive here is that you can submit your own "fake" definition to be added to the list to "Fake Out" other people playing the game. This may sound like a skill-building game for adults, but surprisingly the categories are listed for kindergarten through sixth grade students and older. Should we have paid more attention in grade school or what?

Webmaster: Houghton Mifflin Company

★★★★

THE FRUIT GAME

http://www.2020tech.com/fruit/index.html

At first, this may seem like just another goofy Web game with perishable objects as pawns. You are given seven peaches, five lemons and two oranges. Your goal is to remove the fruit piece by piece so your opponent, the computer is left holding the last piece. If you haven't figured it out by now, this is a math game. You will never

win. The client must always go first and there's no possible way for you to win. Play if you choose, but you'll be left holding the fruit.

Webmaster: daniel@2020tech.com.

★★★

GLIDEPATH FLIGHT SIMULATOR

http://members.aol.com/glidepth/gphp.htm

Unlike flight simulators that allow you to land your virtual plane by aiming toward the runway and touching down, this Webbed landing challenge makes you land your aircraft by relying on instrument indications and control panels only. You must first download the free program, which is Windows 95 and NT compatible, before you can play. This simulator is not easy. It's downright frustrating. But if you like a challenge and have mastered other aerial games, why not give it a whirl?

Webmaster: JohnT8347@aol.com

★★★

HASHI JAPANESE CHOPSTICKS

http://www.egg.or.jp/hyozaemon/Eindex.html

Oh sure, put a monkey on the home page and watch us marvel. The Hashi site is more than an image of a monkey holding chopsticks. Here, you'll

not only learn the appropriate way to handle chopsticks yourself, you'll also learn how using them develops a person's mind and motor skills. Once you learn how to hold the sticks, this site will guide you all the way through to the refined "etiquette" section. "Skewer chopsticks" and "waving-in-the-air chopsticks" are two taboos you won't want to be accused of by chopstick aficionados. The site is loaded with images of different types of sticks and accessories. Viewable in both and English and inJapanese.

Webmaster: Hyozaemon Co.

★★★★

THE RAINBOW ICON ARCHIVE

http://www.enqueue.com/ria/

If you're looking for icons for your Web site or just curious about the origins of gay and lesbian symbols, this site is useful and entertaining. Icons universally recognized by the gay, lesbian and bisexual community can be downloaded here. Images of pink triangles, "pride" colors and awareness ribbons are not all that you will find. A brief statement about the history and significance of each icon is displayed before you begin downloading. Various lesser-known icons, such as the lavender rhinoceros and the labrys, are also featured. The site could be more in-depth, but what is shown is interesting.

Webmaster: jase@enqueue.com.

★★★

TOTALLY AWESOME DUDE

http:// www.rpi.edu/~boothj/80s/lingo.html

This site is grody to the max. The Webmaster has compiled a naive collection of '80s lingo separated into three categories: the good, the bad and the cheezy. Sub-categories, such as "valley girls" and "rap era" pay special attention to the linguistical movements that brought us terms such as, "dope," "chillin'" and "gag me with a spoon." You may disagree with our assessment and say this is the grooviest site you've seen. Don't have a cow. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, even gnarly dweebs.

Webmaster: Codeboy@rpi.edu

★★

WHEEL-TANNER ESCAPE CATALOG

http://www.loop.com/~straitjacket/catalog.html

We know it's a retail site, but you won't find it listed elsewhere, so we couldn't resist. Escape artists and handcuff buffs will enjoy the opportunity to purchase tools and books of their trade through the Internet. Posters of famous escape artists Prynice E. Wheeler and Harry Houdini and novelty items such as Houdini's death certificate are among the numerous items you'll

Wheeler-Tanner

find here, in addition to handcuffs. Also included are images of the items you might be interested in purchasing. We'll warn you now, the handcuffs aren't exactly inexpensive; these aren't the aluminum toys you're used to "playing" with. But fortunately this is the Internet, and window-shopping hasn't been outlawed yet.

Webmaster: Mathew Cooper

★★★★

TEMP-O-RAMA

THE LEADER IN WASTING SKILLS AND EDUCATION ON MENIAL OFFICE JOBS!

Interviewing is one of the most vital skills you can develop in life. Like everything, there's a few secrets to getting that job and not all of them ARE WHAT THEY SEEM. REMEMBER, UNTIL YOU CAN FIND A REAL JOB, THERE'S ALWAYS TEMP-O-RAMA!

TOP TIPS FROM OUR EXPERTS:

*When they ask you if you'd like a cup of coffee, ask for some Schnapps instead. "Just a little something to take the edge off. I'm kind of nervous!"

*Better yet, start drinking the night before so you're sure to head in with a good, head-banging hangover. When you head into an interview with a handicap, you'll try even harder.

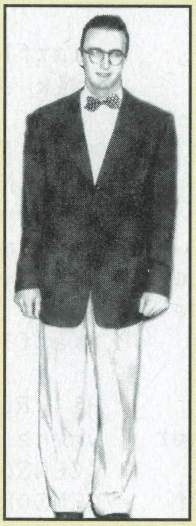
Answer all questions with a counter question. Q. "Do you type?" A. "What do you mean?"

Answer the interviewer's phone so that they can visualize you in the workplace. "Good Morning, Mr. Martin's office...No, he can't come to the phone right now. He's in the middle of a *very* important interview." (Wink)

*Special tip for young, attractive women: Act sexually aggressive. It will put your interviewers at ease, especially if they are middle-aged men who have been previously faced with sexual harassment suits. Say, "I think I'd be very happy working with you," as you slide your hand up his inner thigh.

Make them remember you with your wardrobe. The more bizarre the better! You'll be sure to make an impression.

Complicate all their questions by answering with long, meaningless stories. Ever heard that a long interview is a good interview? Make it *good*. "Where I do expect to be in five years? Funny you should ask. It reminds me of this time my brother and I were driving and alongside the road, we saw this chicken..."



Cry. Openly weeping will make them feel sympathetic toward you. They can't *not* give you the job.

Vomit.

When asked about your goals, mention incarceration.

Wear clothes that make you sweat profusely. They'll see you as a "regular guy" who's excited.

Express complete shock at the most basic descriptions of the job. Such as "WHAT? I have to answer *phones*?!" when applying for a receptionist position.

When asked about your strengths, stress your extensive drug connections. "I can hook you up with whatever you need. I'm talking *anything*."

Admit your flaws. "I do shoddy half-assed work and am frequently prone to insubordination."

Lie ridiculously about your skills. "Can I speak fluent Mandarin Chinese? Sure. C++ programming? That's like some sort of computer language, right? Sure, you bet!"

Smoke incessantly, especially if it's a smoke-free workplace. It will show them you're an independent thinker with a healthy disposition toward authority.

Keep bringing up pointless, trivial benefits. "Enough about the health-care plan. So I'll be getting all the free Snapple I can drink, right? And it's absolutely free, no restrictions? You do have grape, don't you? If someone else doesn't drink their daily allotment of Snapple, can I take it home?"

L@RGE

Mirsky or Artifical Intelligence?

(as if there's a difference..)

Was this column written by the irascible Mirksy or generated by an <intelligent> computer? (See story, page 36). You be the judge. The answer is at the bottom.

> Katflinn: Mirsky, start entering your column for our readers now.

> Mirsky: Hi, Reader! Did I tell you this is my last article? I hardly recognize you! Must be the hat! Adjustable brims give me the creeps! It is terrible!

Hi, Reader! Welcome to Internet Underground, @large article #8, 4K, Microsoft Word document! If you do not like it, you can stick it in your <CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED>. It works for me.

>Katflinn: Mirsky, you might want to keep it clean. I thought you wanted to talk about BITnet.

>Hi, Reader! I have not had a chance to talk to you since the last issue, article #7. How are you doing? How is your mom>s eye infection? Is your brother still being tried for assaulting that priest? What was your best vacation ever? Come on, talk to me!

>Katflinn: What are you talking about? Mirsky!

Hi, Reader! Do you want to know how I am? I am 100% perfectly fine! I just hope I can get the carwash into the cream cheese sandwich without too much finagling.

>Katflinn: Mirsky, maybe you want to talk about this issue.

>Hi, Reader! Have you read the DeathNET article in this issue of Internet Underground? I think the information is very useful. Did I tell you this is my last article?

>Katflinn: Ok, we should stop now.

Hi, Reader! How is the weather where you are? The weather here is <CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED CENSORED>.

Hi, Reader! If you use the World Wide Web, please access my Web site. It is terrible!

Hi, Reader! I want to say goodbye now.

Hi, Reader! I enjoyed having you read my article. Please remember that if you are in need, dial the operator first and then scream as loudly as possible. It works for me.

Answer: Yeah, it is Mirsky. His other columns were written by AI

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